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Cover picture Painted wooden mask and top hat, part of a Mexican dance costume which can be seen at the Museum of Mankind in the exhibition *Eduardo Paolozzi: Lost Magic Kingdoms*, reviewed on page 89. The illustration is taken from the exhibition catalogue.

Rooted in rootlessness

Tony Tanner

JAMES BALDWIN
The Price of the Ticket: Collected non-fiction 1948-1985
690pp. Michael Joseph. £14.95.
07181 26408

One day in the British Museum, a Jamaican asked James Baldwin where he was from. He answered, New York. "Yes, but where are you from?" The question finally clarified itself into "Where are you from in Africa?" And Baldwin, of course, had no way of finding out where he came from in Africa. As he wrote with such graphic clarity in his essay, "Stranger in the Village", the American Negro slave

is unique among the black men in the world in that his past was taken from him, almost literally, at one blow. One wonders what on earth the first slave found to say to the first dark child he bore. I am told there are Haitians able to trace their ancestry back to African kings, but any American Negro wishing to go back so far will find his journey through time abruptly arrested by the signature on the bill of sale which served as the entrance paper for his ancestor.

If there is one fact about the American black which makes both his fate and his position indeed "unique" it is that his is a disorientated people. Slavery, pogroms, genocide, racism are all too horribly recurrent and pervasive, but only the American black has suffered this complete and brutal amputation and obliteration of his past. He is rooted in absolute deracination - the paradox is appropriate because everything about his life and situation is paradoxical, to the point of impossibility. "We cannot escape our origins . . . those origins which contain the key - could we but find it - to all that we later become." But how can you find the key if you can't find the origins? "Know whence you came. If you know whence you came, there is really no limit to where you can go." But if you only know you come from Harlem, what kind of knowledge of origin is that? It is a knowledge of being born into an utterly inexplicable and gratuitous condition of being rejected, disesteemed, despised, alienated, deprived - born into the "bastardy of colour", since black people in America have no lineage: "the American Negro has arrived at his identity by virtue of the absoluteness of his estrangement from the past". One reason why America has sought so virulently to deny, dehumanize, and viciously repress its blacks must be the fact that their very presence and the appalling history of their treatment invalidate every myth and ideal on which America was founded. No matter how silenced or dispossessed, the American black gives the constant lie to every formulation of the American Dream.

For many years, James Baldwin has traced the torments and travails of the endeavour to forge an identity out of this paradoxical status. As he noted at the start of his writing career,

I was a kind of bastard in the West . . . I was an interloper; this was not my heritage. At the same time I had no other heritage which I could possibly hope to use . . . I would have to appropriate these white centuries, I would have to make them mine - I would have to accept my special attitude, my special place in this scheme - otherwise I would have no place in any scheme.

He has had to find his legitimation in his imposed, and recognized, cultural bastardy. Looking at the inhabitants of the Swiss village where he was staying, he noted that these people could never be "strangers anywhere in the world". Even if they didn't know it, they helped to make that world, whereas he is regarded as, and feels, "a suspect latecomer, bearing no credentials", everywhere an interloper. Since there seems to be no given place for the American black, then in one way or another he has to appropriate one. Michel de Certeau has described some of the strategies for the "reappropriation of autonomy" deployed by the masses in their resistance to the coercive and controlling systems of modern life, and the American black is the figure who has had to devise such strategies above all. From the start, the slave was "living in the presence of more human freedom and individual opportunity than they or anybody had ever seen before". (Albert Murray). No other slaves, surely, ever had to live and move in an atmosphere so saturated with notions - or eloquence - concerning freedom, equality, and the

rights of man. Blacks are an "inescapable part of the social fabric". The question running through Baldwin's work, arguably through all Afro-American writing, is simply: how is a black person to live, to be, in America? Not how to become white, or like the whites, or even equal to the whites, but just how to exist on terms which not only were none of their making, but which effectively contrived to deny or occlude their right to a human existence. As Baldwin put it: "There was absolutely no way not to be black without ceasing to exist. But it frequently seemed that there was no way to be black, either, without ceasing to exist." But if we care to entertain Richard Wright's terse proposition that the "Negro is America's metaphor" or Baldwin's assertion that "he is

in its denunciations, so intelligent in its commentary fervour, that it was simply unanswerable, literally irresistible. Yet despite his message to his nephew in that book that "this innocent country set you down in a ghetto in which, in fact, it intended that you should perish", he still stresses the vital meaning of "the words acceptance and integration" and adds that despite white people's collusive attempts to make the Negro feel "a worthless human being", still "you must accept them and accept them with love".

Now turn to this: whereas white men have killed black men for sport, or out of terror or out of the intolerable excess of terror called hatred, or out of the necessity of affirming their identity as white men, none of these motives



Anne-Louis Girodet-Trioson's portrait of Jean-Baptiste Belley, c.1797, a leader of the Santo Domingo uprising against France in the early nineteenth century; from Great Drawings from The Art Institute of Chicago: The Harold Joachim years 1958-1983 (222pp. New York: Hudson Hills Press, \$50, 0933920 69 5).

the key figure in this country, and the American future is precisely as bright or as dark as his", it is a paradox of potentially more far-reaching implications.

James Baldwin made his greatest impact in his essays of the 1950s and early 1960s, culminating in *The Fire Next Time* - that electrifying pronouncement of 1963. Since then he has been less audible, but now with the publication of his collected essays we can see which way his thoughts and words have been tending over the last twenty years. *The Price of the Ticket* should certainly secure his reputation as one of the major American essayists, though the later work in some ways makes for disappointing reading. To get some idea of how Baldwin's disposition and thinking have changed (and remained the same) we might compare some key passages from his major essays. At the end of "Notes of a Native Son" (1955), an extremely powerful and balanced account of his relationship with his father, he stressed two ideas which seem to be in opposition: "the first idea was acceptance, the acceptance, totally without rancour, of life as it is", which did not diminish the importance of the second idea, "that one must never, in one's own life, accept injustices as commonplace but must fight them with all one's strength"; and at the same time strive "to keep my own heart free of hatred and despair". In *The Fire Next Time* he remarked that "for the horrors of the American Negro's life there has been almost no language". Baldwin certainly found the language for some of them, language at once so poised and piercing, so cool in its fury, so scrupulous

appear necessarily to obtain for black men: it is not necessary for a black man to hate a white man, or to have any particular feeling about him at all, in order to realize that he must kill him. Yes, we have come, or are coming to this, and there is no point in flinching before the prospect of this exceedingly cool species of fratricide.

That is from *No Name in the Street*; it is almost ten years later (1972); Martin Luther King and Malcolm X have been assassinated (to mention only two key figures), and Baldwin has lost his precarious optimism. All traces of idealism are gone. There are frequent references to the Third Reich and America is now seen as a Fourth Reich. Western history is to be "demolished" and Western culture is to be rejected since black people have "no honourable access" to its monuments. All "attempts at dialogue" seem to have broken down; the "pretended humanism" of the West is simply a "lie"; "trust" is no longer possible. He recalls those "great days" when he was considered to be an "integrationist" and seems almost to welcome the inevitability of "an open confrontation". Malcolm X is re-evaluated and admired as "a genuine revolutionary" ("a virile impulse long since fled from the American way of life").

As one reads this long account of intolerable incidents in black life, interwoven with reminiscences of Martin Luther King, Medgar Evers, Malcolm X, and a young man named William Maynard Jr. who was imprisoned for a murder he did not commit and whose case is used to exemplify the inhumanity in the systematic injustice handed out to black people, it

is hard to make any defence against Baldwin's indictments or to give good reasons why he should modify his hardening despair. Except by referring him to his own earlier essays - not for their optimistic formulations, but for their maintained human (not just "Western") tone, their unflagging intelligence and vigilant, sensitive openness. Perhaps Baldwin has been responding to criticisms of his work - or stance - by other black writers; perhaps the years have simply brought a contracting of vision, a loss of hope. Certainly, the work has started to become repetitious, both in content (an endless reminding of his childhood in Harlem, his self-exile in Europe, his experiences in the Civil Rights movement) and concept (biblical and existential - "identity" is the most commonly recurring word); and it has become at once more strident and less truly urgent.

There is some change of approach in *The Devil Finds Work* (1976), in which Baldwin reviews the representation of blacks in films and lays bare all the dehumanizing, neutralizing and stereotyping to be found in films as various as *Birth of a Nation*, *The Defiant Ones* and *Lady Sings the Blues*. As always, he exposes new aspects of white self-deception, but a weariness as well as a harsh sadness have entered his writing. There are in *The Price of the Ticket* only seven short and mainly ephemeral essays published since *The Devil Finds Work*, and only one since 1980. This one is frankly a trivial piece written for *Playboy* on androgyny. It is a far cry from the like animation, the feline adroitness, the real vivacity and momentum of the essays in *Notes of a Native Son* and *Nobody Knows My Name*, which remain, to my mind, his finest work.

James Baldwin is American, black, homosexual and successful. Each of these factors serves to complicate his role and activity as a writer in a particular way. Early on, Baldwin declared that he wanted to prevent himself "from becoming merely a Negro; or even merely a Negro writer". He maintained, then (in the early 1950s), that the question of colour "operates to hide the graver questions of the self". This was a perfectly proper bid to be, and be taken as, an American, indeed a universal, writer - unconstrained by potentially limiting categorizations and classifications. But his essays continually revert to the fact and results of race prejudice and the plight and problems of American blacks and he is forced to forsake the stance of universality and give prominence to his own blackness. One can see the problem in his shifting use of personal pronouns. "We" is sometimes we human beings, sometimes we Americans, sometimes (a rhetorical device) we white Americans, sometimes we black Americans, sometimes it is "we - and now I mean the relatively conscious whites and relatively conscious blacks". Another dimension of the problem concerns Baldwin's attitude to society - he tends to see the writer and society as mutually exclusive (which raises more problems when the question of his solidarity with blacks and black organizations arises): "I loved my country . . . and I loved my work . . . It was beginning to be clear to me that these two loves might, never, in my life be reconciled: no man can serve two masters." In his earlier writing the conflict was enabling and productive, generating some of his best essays. But there is another aspect to the problem which a brief glance at his novels can illuminate.

In *Tell Me How Long the Train's Been Gone* (1968) the actor Leo Proudhammer says, "The only space which means anything to me is the space between myself and other people", and it is that intimate space which Baldwin's fiction most characteristically patrols and explores. In *Go Tell It on the Mountain* (1953), apart from the vivid recreation of his experience growing up in Harlem and being involved with preaching, the main concern is with John's relationship with his father. "John struggled to speak the authoritative, the living word that would conquer the great division between his father and himself. But it did not come, the living word" - what comes is rage, hate, tears, dread, hysteria, and a desperate need for love. The general condition of most of the characters seems to be actual or spiritual fatherlessness. And John desperately wants to get away, not only from his frightening father, Gabriel

Grimes, but from his whole condition. "And he struggled to flee – out of this darkness, out of this company – into the land of the living, so high, so far away." That "company" is composed of "the despised and rejected, the wretched and spat-upon" and his great fear is "they would swallow up his soul". There is a lot of biblical rhetoric but not much sense of the part that poverty and racial oppression play in the condition of the characters. Remember that Baldwin criticized Richard Wright for trying to present and explain Bigger Thomas (in *Native Son*) as a perverted product of society: "the reality of man as a social being is not his only reality and that artist is strangled who is forced to deal with human beings solely in social terms". Not his only reality, but unavoidably a crucial part of his reality, and a part which Baldwin in general scants. He is more aware of man as a sexual being, and often most importantly a homosexual being. Thus in *Giovanni's Room* (1956) the main focus is on the relationship between David and Giovanni. David finally abandons Giovanni, effectively to the guillotine, in favour of a heterosexual relationship with Hella, thus apparently leaving Giovanni's dirty little room and all it represents, behind him. His question to Giovanni – "What kind of life can two men have together, anyway?" – seems to rule out that possible avenue to a satisfactory love relationship. But in general in Baldwin's fiction, heterosexual lovemaking is brutal, even bestial, and disintegrative, while homosexual embraces can be fulfilling, even transcendent. They make whole.

Baldwin's preoccupation with this area of life does seem to involve a withdrawal from politics and society in his fiction. In *Another Country* (1962) the emphasis is squarely on sex – often lustful, violent, predatory and hysterical. There is little achieved love. The main characters are artists (mainly bad or failed) of one kind or another – and to that extent desocialized – and the problems are worked out and experienced almost exclusively in the pri-

vate space of sex. There is suicide and madness – and desperation everywhere. In love, and the lack or impossibility of it, lies the key. There is little about the power of various social forces: racial considerations are kept to a minimum. The improbable Eric is the best adjusted and seemingly most happy and serene figure, and the implications of the novel are pessimistic, and worse. Donald Gibson asked a fair question when he wrote: "what does a black writer mean when he shows the best-adjusted character in the novel to be white and the worst black? What does it mean when he is unable or unwilling to show a single good relationship, homosexual or heterosexual, between two black people?" When the character Cass says "there are other countries – have you ever thought of that?" it suggests the aspiration towards some other country of fulfilled trans-racial, trans-gender love. But the book itself effectively serves to show that there isn't "another country" – only the unexplained chaos and failures of this one, America.

The problems of sex and society are somewhat schematically addressed in *Tell Me How Long the Train's Been Gone*, as Proudhammer tries to assess and balance the claims of the private and the public life. White Barbara represents orthodoxy: sexual, cultural, political, social. She offers the comforts of wealth and "racelessness"; acceptance by and into the status quo. Black Christopher is revolutionary black politics, sexual aberration, guns, the voice of the rejected and deprived. Proudhammer is sexually, emotionally, and arguably ideologically, drawn to both. Yet he is not really close to Christopher, who rightly tells him: "But, naturally, a whole lot of black cats think you might be one of them, and, in a way, you stand to lose just as much as white people stand to lose." Proudhammer finally has a heart attack and leaves for Europe alone, with nothing resolved. It is as though Baldwin himself cannot see beyond these rather crudely polarized alternatives: white culture or black guns. Arguably there is a failure of vision here,

as though Baldwin were blocked and arrested by his diagnostic simplifications and omissions. He is all too insufficiently a social novelist.

The important Afro-American fiction of recent years has been written by such authors as Ishmael Reed, Alice Walker, John Edgar Wideman, David Bradley. Not, that is, by James Baldwin. This is at least partly because Baldwin's vision is too private, too obsessed with problems relating to sexual identity and fulfilment. At their best his essays – many of them as fine and compelling as any written this century – can draw on these obsessions in more inclusive discussions of problems of identity and participation and creativity, set in a broader context of more wide-ranging examinations of matters of social, racial and personal conscience. Here the passages directly relating to his own individual experience are deployed to often pungently dramatic and relevant effect. Autobiographical material has provided both the ground and the sinew of his essays. It has not, I think, proved so fruitful for his fiction. It is in his essays that he has manifested and impressively succeeded in the ambition he inscribed at the end of the introduction to his first collection: "I want to be an honest man and a good writer."

To judge by his introduction to this volume, Baldwin is now intransigently committed to a

stance of pessimism. Arguably, the condition of blacks has improved since he started writing, but any notion of amelioration is vehemently repudiated: "yes: we have lived through lanches of tokens and concessions but power remains white." His language is full of extremism – the black "Holocaust", "missing identity", that "aches". It would be impertinent for me to say whether or not his obduracy is disproportionate. But it does seem for rigidity and a certain coarseness of terms in the writing. It is as if he has given up on America and in doing so has given up on grappling with the complexity of his position and allegiances. It is not that he has "trayed" America: "you can't betray a country you don't have. (Think about it.)" I would rather, whether he has not betrayed himself in himself, something so manifest in the essays. But we cannot ignore the disturbing cogency of his constant challenging and assurance of all the unexamined assumptions and more importantly, the subtle, pervasive mutilations, involved in the self-philosophical self-enslaving notions of identity which people cling to. "They require of me a less to celebrate my captivity than to justify their own." We'd certainly better think about that.

Cutting common sense

James Campbell

WILLIAM BURROUGHS

The Adding Machine: Collected essays
201pp. Calder. £10.95.
07145 40730

BRION GYSIN and TERRY WILSON

Here to Go: Planet R-101
278pp. Quartet. £12.50.
07043 25446

A youthful literary effort by William Burroughs concerned a boy grieving over the loss of a dog. He is accosted by a man, "thin and grey with pinpoint eyes", offering him drugs which he accepts, becoming hooked. After a close shave with death, the boy turns himself in to the law. "And if any kind stranger ever offers me some pills that will drive all my blues away, I will simply call a policeman."

Burroughs was writing his future; in it he was to star not as the boy but as the man with pinpoint eyes. But although he became a pick-pocket, drug pusher, rat-catcher, private detective and, at last, a notorious writer, Burroughs has never really given up that streak of commonsensical respectability. When Lucien Carr committed a murder he went to Kerouac, who helped him dispose of the weapon; both then turned to Burroughs, who sent them direct to the police station. In a piece printed in *The Adding Machine*, he means that his creative-writing students were "disappointed because I wore a coat and tie to class". The image of "William Burroughs" has, he says, little relation to the facts. Burroughs is, for one thing, much more literary than any of his literary associates. Who could imagine Ginsberg, Corso or Cassady troubling to make this kind of distinction (from "Beckett and Proust"):

That he was a mob humanizes Proust in a way that Beckett's never humanized. Beckett's basic motivations are obscure. Proust, in a sense, wrote to encompass and make appropriate the society that never completely accepted him.

The Adding Machine contains similar remarks on Hemingway, a writer Burroughs clearly admires though seems to feel he shouldn't; Fitzgerald, Maugham and Genet. It also has a decent helping of asides which would not disappoint those creative-writing students: "my humble ambition [was] to be Commissioner of Sewers for St Louis". "Women may well be a biological mistake". "Mental illness is largely a psychiatric invention", and so on. In addition, it shows him cutting up *The Great Gatsby* and leaping from rational argument on drugs or orgasm boxes, to the demotic routines familiar from his novels:

Hypnotic subjects have been able to recall exactly what they did and heard, and during an operation and recall can be extremely disturbing.

"One thing is sure – he don't look good!"
"A filthy mess."
"Sew her up, it's inoperable."
"A round of drinks he dies on the table."
These irresponsible observations are recorded stored in the patient's memory bank....

This helps to explain Burroughs's literary productivity: in fiction, non-fiction, memoir talk (which many of these "essays" are) and idiom is the same – he actually speaks like this.

The book has been assembled with carelessness: there are numerous printing mistakes (up to five on a page), including a delightful Burroughsian one in which his words are in quotation with those of a revived critic. In petitions occur throughout: one instance is him recalling "Brion Gysin, Stewart Goble and I... sitting in front of a little Spanish café", while in a different version Gysin has been rubbed out and Ian Somerville inserted in his place. In Burroughs's scheme of things such accidents are no accident.

Brion Gysin could no doubt tell you why he has Burroughs's gift for the gab, but not the talent. Like Burroughs's, his outrageousness is part of a personal strategy evolved to resist the forces of "Control" that both see everywhere but he lacks the latter's mischievousness which enables the sceptical reader to accept half of everything he says and does, it only the fun it provides. They are equals in glibness ("so you have it with your own right-hand painting") and occasionally in epigrammatism ("writing is fifty years behind painting"). Gysin developed the clever technique which Burroughs once expounded with such tedious results (contrary to popular supposition, *The Naked Lunch* contains no cut-up passages), has invented a device done a lot of recording of dogs barking and would be quite possible to decipher what they're talking about... It's like *fuck-fuck-fuck here – food-food here*). On top of all that he has made films, written a novel, *The Product* (lately reissued: 353pp. Quartet. £8.95, 07043 2525 X), and at the age of nineteen exhibited with the Surrealists, before Breton expelled him – though for what we are not told in his series of interviews with Terry Wilson.

Here to Go: Planet R-101 is a collage of text and photographs, mostly of Gysin in one of his landish costumes or another, which are a note to the story of the Best Generation, curious enough to be of interest. But it is placed faith in the first word as the best word has inhibited Wilson's editing skills:

T: He designed tarot cards.
B: Yeah...
T: A new set of tarot cards.
B: Yeah, so he did. How did you even know?
T: I saw them the other day.
B: No kidding?

Too much of this kind of thing makes the book a little bit of a bore.

Affirmations of belief

Timothy Garton Ash

ROSEMARY KAVAN

Freedom at a Price: An Englishwoman's life in Czechoslovakia
278pp. Verso. £9.95.
08691 1187

Here is a simple, fine, deeply affecting book. It is the story of a young Englishwoman who married a Czech communist in Britain in 1945, and went to live in Prague. Her husband, Pavel, became a victim of the Stalinist show trials, and died just a few years after being released from prison, his health and his idealistic fervour ruined by the socialist state he had wished only to serve. During his imprisonment and after his death his wife had to bring up her two sons alone, in conditions of extreme hardship. The crushing of the Prague Spring, in which the whole family was passionately involved, drove out first the sons, and then, finally, Rosemary Kavan herself – back into a kind

of exile in her own country. Thus starkly summarized, her story sounds a bleak and tragic one, and so in many ways it is. Yet the overwhelming impression left by this book is one of warmth, true comradeship, courage and hope.

This is, in the first place, very much a woman's story. Mrs Kavan writes with a quite uncommon mixture of tenderness and honesty about her husband, her lovers, her children and herself. She describes how Pavel, an exotically, impetuous figure in Czech army uniform, dragged her suddenly and bodily from the tepid shallows of English middle-class life into the whirlpool of central European experience (social, political and, not least, amorous experience). But she also describes, quite as vividly, the slow, horrid deterioration of their marriage, almost step by step with the descent of Czechoslovakia into Stalinist misery. Pavel treated her as imperiously as any cartoon capitalist – "and this", she exclaims, "was the man for whom I'd given up family and homeland, not to mention marmite and mar-

malade!" (Most of the book reads like a long letter home to a close friend, direct, conversational, even chatty, and limping only in the few passages where it is self-consciously "literary".) While Pavel was in prison she fell in love with another man, Milan. But her position was tragic: "If [Pavel] had been 'outside', free, on an equal footing, I could have given him up and married Milan. But his hands were tied and that bound mine... I loved Milan. I did not love Pavel. But I was bound by loyalty to Pavel. In jail, or released after many years' deprivation, the time to leave him would never be right." She did not leave him.

Private experience is the foreground of Rosemary Kavan's memoirs, as it is for most of our ordinary lives. But in her case, the private and public history are inextricable, and in recounting the former she gives us extraordinary glimpses of the latter. This is true of spectacular events like the Stalinist trials and the Prague Spring, but equally compelling is her account of "normal" life. If anyone has any illusions about the superior position of women under "real socialism" they should read her account of this system

that offered freedom from exploitation by men (except husbands), emancipation (from everything except child-bearing, home-running, and the need to take up gainful employment because a man's salary could not support a family), and victory in the fight for equal rights and equal pay (by taking the less lucrative jobs the men were only too happy to leave them.)

But there are some salutary knocks for the *Reader's Digest* view of Eastern Europe as well: for example, her observation that "On the whole [in 1946] the Czechs were genuinely grateful to the Russians and tolerant of the excesses committed by the liberating army on its march towards Prague."

Of course, that gratitude was more than completely extinguished by the second Russian march to Prague, in 1968. Kavan gives a lively account of the gallant band of student opposi-

has to put to sea again, and this "extra" voyage becomes his true Odyssey.

Its turning-point comes, appropriately, in a storm which threatens to overwhelm the boat. The fisheries manager has ordered the nets to be lowered for trawling because he wants to fulfil the plan. But once lowered, and indeed full of fish, the nets hamper the ship's manoeuvrability and hold its water-line dangerously low. Nor can the catch be hauled on deck in the heavy seas. The captain is in a terrible dilemma: he can be prosecuted for losing the nets, whereas to lose the whole ship and even its crew would be classified as a mere "natural misfortune" (the Soviet juridical equivalent of an "act of God"). He is therefore loath to cut the nets loose. Senya, however, does so, acting against orders and on his own initiative, and thus saves the ship.

Returning to port, Senya finds the singleness of purpose in himself to hit on the right girl, and even eventually to convince her that he is determined to abandon his nomadic, polygamous existence. Something in him has changed, a "tempering of the steel" has occurred, not through revolutionary struggle (which used to be the mandatory way for Soviet heroes to achieve this) but through independence of spirit and openness to the needs of others, symbolized in the three minutes of radio silence in every hour when SOS messages can be picked up.

For the translator this novel must have been a formidable assignment. Vladimir is a master of the language of his milieu, and especially of the sardonic, throw-away line cultivated by young people in a tough working environment. In one sense, then, the novel should perhaps have been translated in a Humboldtian trawlermen's patois. That, however, would have made much of the text incomprehensible even in Watford, let alone Westchester County. In the event, Michael Glenny has rendered it in a generally Home Counties colloquial, spiced with maritime expressions. Some saltiness has been lost, but most of the liveliness and intimacy of the original has been preserved.

But what is one to say of the editorial decision to cut out one or two major portions of the text? I miss in particular the Legend of the Flying Dutchman, the story recounted by all Murmansk trawlermen of the sailor who on the final day of each fishing trip would not even wait to dock in harbour, but would request transfer at sea to an outgoing ship. He kept this up for years on end. Nobody knew who he was or where he came from, or why he seemed to have no connections on shore. Was he merely trying to make a fabulous amount of money, or was he driven by some dark secret? This legend appears in both the *Novy mir* and *Posev* texts, and seems to me to impart a certain mystery, even a mythical dimension, to an otherwise soberly realist work. It is for this kind of sur-

rounded existence. These dreams come to nothing, partly because they are vague and unformed (which girl, for instance?), but more repudiated because he overdoes the celebration of his farewell to the fleet, and while para-phrasing drunk in robbed of his hard-earned pay by two "beachera" (onshore hoodlums who were cat about, and who (rightly) calls Vladimir a "champion of human rights", should surely be more punctilious.

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Beauty in despair

L. A. Siegel

JOHN STRATTON HAWLEY
Sur Das: Poet, singer, saint
236pp. Seattle: University of Washington
Press. \$25.
0295961023

As the telling, hearing and remembering of stories about exemplary devotional saints became acts of worship in India during the medieval period, a great corpus of hagiographical literature was generated. These biographies of enraptured lovers of god, neither burdened by fact nor obfuscated by history, provide portraits not of men and women who did once live, but of devoted souls who, unembodied, live for ever, and yet grow and change, and show people how to love their god. These eidolons of passionate piety, collective spirits formed of dreams, songs and whispers, were born and are reborn in imagination to move, inspire and offer solace.

One of the most popular and revered of these personifications of religious emotion in north India is the sixteenth-century poet Sur Das, the man to whom the songs in the Hindi *Sur Sagar* are attributed. Keenly sensitive to the tension between historical and dramatic truth, between literal and affective fact, John Hawley begins his study of this legendary spirit of *bhakti* with a judicious examination of the forms, motives and logic of the literary sources for the legends of the blind singer who wandered his way through the sacred places where his beloved Krishna once danced and played. With a conviction that these legends tell us less about Sur Das than about his biographers, Professor Hawley searches for traces of the man in the poetic echoes of his voice as recorded in the *Sur Sagar*.

Carefully scrutinizing manuscripts and recensions, Hawley analyses the evolution of this enormous text. He delineates the accumulation of layer upon layer of new poetry and new religious ideology, and then peels back the layers to expose what may be the earliest text. Focusing upon the central themes within it, Hawley explains the power and appeal of the songs celebrating the exquisite pain of love in separation from the beloved, the emotional longing that was exemplified by Radha and the milkmaids of Braj. He perceptively examines the ways in which human emotions, natural impulses and traditionally feminine sentiments became sanctified in song. The lyrics, beautifully and freshly translated by Hawley, reflect an earthy faith which is passionate and yet good-humoured, simple and yet mysterious:

*Life has filtered away in a 'hokid' tiny bothers -
Matters of state, of salary, of sons.
Without my even noticing, my life has ambled off
And tangled in illusion, in a snare so foolproof -
that I can never break it or wiggle it loose.
Songs of the Lord, gatherings of the good -*

I left myself hanging in air without either.
Like an overagee acrobat who craves just one more
trick
as if his ample cleverness could hide his skimpy
clothes;
Like a sad abandoned strumpet, says Sur,
who sways and swings her hips when her lover is
gone.

The devotionism of medieval India is characterized by two trends, one, largely sectarian, in which the manifest form of god is worshipped as his most intimate (and therefore highest) form, and one in which the unmanifest nature of god is worshipped as its most absolute and universal (and therefore highest) dimension. At first, as he assumes the sweet and carnal voice of Radha, Sur Das seems to exemplify the former trend, but Hawley shows with subtlety and insight that there is in the *Sur Sagar* also the darker and more ironic voice of a *sant*, one of the group of saints who held that god was formless. The *sant* poet confesses his sin, folly and anguish in song. "Sing, fools, says Sur, a song to the Lord who burns away the trials of the low."



A detail from a painting depicting the infant Krishna floating on the Cosmic Ocean, reproduced from India: Art and Culture 1300-1900 by Stuart Cary Welch (478pp. Deutsch. ESO. 003 0061148), which will be reviewed in a forthcoming issue of the TLS.

Icons of contradiction

Partha Mitter

MICHAEL W. MEISTER (Editor)
Discourses on Siva: Proceedings of a
symposium on the nature of religious imagery
362pp. Philadelphia: University of
Pennsylvania Press; distributed in the UK by
International Book Distributors. £75.
0812279093

Discourses on Siva celebrates the Hindu "erotic-ascetic" god. Why particularly Siva? The choice is not entirely fortuitous. Siva alone of the major gods seems to challenge the very core of European rationality with its insistence on the "law of the excluded middle" - that a thing cannot be both *x* and non-*x* at the same time. How can this god be the king of ascetics when he displays a phallus that cannot be ignored? Such a paradox recurs with his guardianship of the dead and the spirits in the dread cremation places, an office that appears to contradict his creative-procreative function. Appropriately the ancient Greeks compared him with their own enigmatic Dionysos. As each layer is peeled off, other, even more contradictory, elements come to light. Thus, this violent god is also the most romantic, faith-

ful and docile of husbands. Compared to him the other major Hindu deity, the solar, patriarchal Visnu is a mere simple-minded male.

This book, ably edited by Michael Meister, is the result of the symposium held in conjunction with an exhibition of Hindu sculpture at the Philadelphia Museum in 1981. In essence a Festschrift, it pays tribute to Stella Kramrisch's contribution to Indology. The twenty-four contributors are mainly of art-historical orientation. The authors' collective aim is iconological, in seeking relations between artefacts and literary sources; the new departure here is the conscious attempt of some contributors to "correct" earlier works (which did not examine the meaning of Hindu architecture and sculpture from the "inside"), thereby shedding light on the general nature of the sacred. Kramrisch's paper argues for three different layers of meaning in the complex iconographic programme at the great rock-cut temple dedicated to Siva at Elephanta. Christl von Mitterwallner's arguments and carefully sequenced diagrams lend support to the notion that the *linga* evolved from a phallic form to an abstract concept, thus contradicting those who had to see the cult entirely in symbolic terms. Doris Stimpfyan challenges the accepted view of the pre and non-Aryan origins of the Siva

If Sur Das had been a religious teacher, a philosopher, he might be accused of inconsistency. But he was a singer. And, Hawley argues, in song the contradictions and confusions cease to matter. They are a part of an expansive vision. Philosophical flaws become aesthetic qualities. And Hawley's book is about the aesthetic dimensions of religion. Art is beatitude and redemption. Song is holy. In song despair attains beauty and, through it, meaning. "If anything in the *Sur Sagar* spells release and salvation, it is the act of singing itself", Hawley writes. "Even when the song is a lament, the act of voicing it and directing it to its Source brings a measure of fulfillment, a degree of closure, a taste of deliverance. Song, for Sur - singing to the Lord - is as close as one can come to salvation."

Written with grace, sensitivity and intelligence, *Sur Das* is also a work of rigorous scholarship. Lyrical translation, learned exegesis and lucid criticism make it an important contribution to the study of Indian vernacular literature and medieval religious movements.

Mirage material

Charles Allen

ANTONIO MONROY, ANTONIO MARINELLI
and ROBERTO MEAZZA
India
287pp. Orbis. £25.
0856139467
STEPHEN P. HUYLER
Village India
272pp. Abrams. £24.95.
0810917289

There seem to be two main schools of thought about how best to grapple with the phenomenon of India. While the rationalists tend to get stuck in on the parts, from which to draw conclusions about the whole, the intuitivists prefer to work in broad superficial sweeps, but in all, making no judgments. Their guru (and a key word in the latter school) might well be E. M. Forster: "Nothing in India is ideal, the mere asking of a question causes it to disappear or to merge into something else."

India is a superb example of this "top-down" school of scholarship, even to the extent of giving neither the author of its text, Antonio Monroy, nor Antonio Marinelli and Roberto Meazza, the two photographers, any credit in its front cover. Large, glossy and richly illustrated, it illuminates its subject through a ranging selection of well-chosen, often striking images. Marinelli and Meazza lack the identification with place and subject that distinguishes, for instance, the photography of Raghubir Singh, but their names should be written large on the dust-jacket and tucked furtively inside in 6 Point Bold. Many publishers fear that potential customers will reel back in horror at finding unknown and alien names on the jacket or was this a quixotic attempt on their part to align themselves with the general philosophy of the book which seeks to display - and in general succeeds very well - both the enormous breadth and the potency of the Indian experience.

Village India seeks to go a little deeper. Stephen Huyler has spent much of the last fourteen years "conducting a cross-cultural survey of India's rural material culture", and puts him firmly among the rationalists. After a brief and in several respects misleading overview of Indian history under the guise of "the evolution of Indian villages", the author considers thirteen rural areas of the subcontinent and some of the more obscure regions, such as Orissa tribal lands, are included at the expense of better known areas like the Punjab or Maharashtra. Each is generously illustrated with photographs, the majority taken by the author.

The roaring, pullulating India of towns and industrial landscapes, that exports machinery, food grains and know-how to much of the Third World, is often seen as a mere veneer whose very existence many foreign observers are loath to acknowledge. This new India is referred to briefly in *India* (where it is illustrated with a couple of lively shots of crowded thoroughfares) but in *Village India* it is almost no existence at all. Stephen Huyler is at pains to point out that his is a study of "all the material aspects of a village" yet makes no reference to the changing patterns of village culture and the ever-increasing impact of the outside world on even the most remote rural areas. The conclusion engine has not yet reached his books: there are no power lines, telephone wires, irrigation schemes or artesian wells to mar the scenery; his villages have no family planning symbols or film posters on their walls; their interiors are unblemished by plastic vessels, soft-drink bottles, radio-cassette recordings or any other manifestation of post-1947 modernity. Even his epilogue, where one might reasonably have expected some sort of reflection on changing times, is given over to "all the things a tourist's eye view of the Vale of Kashmir, the houseboats and lotus greens. In short, *Village India* turns out to be a mirage, an Arabian Nights India as perceived through American eyes, filtered and purified. It will go a long way towards strengthening the convictions of those who believe that there is indeed a "pure" India not only deeply rooted, but also firmly in the past.

Incestuous initiation

Ernest Gellner

PETER GAY
Freud for Historians
252pp. Oxford University Press. £16.50.
0195035860

Peter Gay is a historian of distinction, known mainly but not exclusively for his work on the Enlightenment. He is, however, also deeply committed to the therapeutic technique which, more than any other perhaps, has undermined Enlightenment optimism about human rationality. He has undergone full training as a psychoanalyst, under the auspices of an American institute which presumably does not insist on a medical qualification. He did this at a late stage in his career, when five of his books were already published, and one other must have been completed. The present work is evidently intended to persuade his fellow historians to follow in his footsteps, if not into a training analysis, then at least to a more committed deployment of Freudian ideas.

Psycho-history burst in on American history in 1958, Professor Gay tells us, but its initial impact was not followed by a general acceptance. Instead, there was a good measure of criticism and rejection. The criticisms formulated by these reluctant historians Gay describes, rather characteristically, as "aggressive defenses". He is a zealous missionary for his faith, and the slow rate of conversion, not to mention actual backsliding, provokes him into impatience and irritation.

One of the criticisms/defences which historians in particular are liable to set up is that psychoanalysis is "in its very essence unhistorical, with its postulate of a stable human nature". Lawrence Stone is cited as a specially bad and positively ungrateful example of this attitude among historians. His attempts to invoke historical diversity, and the specificity of "middle-class culture of late Victorian Europe", are dismissed with scorn: "The last

to teach Freud what he already knows seems to be hard to contain." So, according to Gay, Freud was fully aware of this diversity, and there is absolutely no need to tell him about it.

Yet later in the book, the thesis of a universal human nature, and a Freudian one to boot, is reaffirmed:

The predominant evidence from experimental psychology, sociology, and anthropology strongly suggests, though it does not conclusively prove, a good fit between Freud's theory and human experience - everywhere. The oedipal triangle has made its appearance in all recorded cultures, even in the Trobriand Islands. . . .

(Emphasis added.) The fact that Malinowski denied this is discounted by Gay, on the grounds that Melford Spiro "demonstrated conclusively that Malinowski badly misread his materials, and that these very materials offer strong grounds for attributing an Oedipus complex to the Trobriand islanders". But how can Freud consistently be defended against Stone by saying that he knew full well that human nature was diverse, and against Malinowski by the opposite claim, to the effect that a proper reading of ethnography supports the view that human nature is after all everywhere the same?

A critic of Stone fares no better at Gay's hands. Gay refers to a thirty-page critique of Stone by Alan Macfarlane and, with admiration, to Macfarlane's study of the puritanical Rev Ralph Josselin, dreams and all; but he notes with reproachful regret that Macfarlane fails to use Freud either in his critical or in his interpretative work. Though elsewhere he comes down hard on facile, instant-depth interpretations, Gay, who to my knowledge has had no opportunity to psychoanalyse him, displays no hesitation at all in telling us the full dreadful truth about the inner Alan Macfarlane. His "striking omission must have been a matter of helplessness before Freud. . . . Evidently, far from having tried Freud and found him wanting, Macfarlane has found Freud trying and has decided to evade him." Macfarlane, you have been shown up for what you are, and you must

realize that such evasiveness will get you nowhere. All this, Gay concludes, "adds up to a great refusal".

Gay is troubled not merely by the great refusal of psychoanalysis by historians, but also by its more general refusal by (some) philosophers. His overall summary - unlike the detailed arguments - of their charges is indisputably both accurate and eloquent, and this inspires respect: how many writers could formulate a position they detest with such precision and vigour? "Psychoanalytic theory, its detractors have insisted, is merely a cosy club of mutually reinforcing notions . . . self-validating propositions immune to testing. . . . [stated] in language so loose, so imprecise and cloudy, that it fits all human experience whatever." Well put. What is the answer? The fact that "the youthful . . . Karl Popper. . . he was then all of seventeen" ranked psychoanalysis among the "pseudo-sciences" is noted with irony; but charges worse than precocity quickly follow. Gay twice implies that Popper does not deserve a reply, but that he, Gay, stoops to offering one merely because other historians have been misled into taking Popper's strictures seriously.

But if Popper is discussed, he ought not to be misrepresented, and credited with views which are the exact opposite of what he has repeatedly emphasized. Popper never offered a criterion of "dependable knowledge" (my italics); he offered a criterion of science in terms of the absence of dependability, and the presence of risk. He has always stressed that dependability is the most suspect trait in a cognitive claim. Gay also completely misunderstands Popper when he credits him with the bizarre view that positive evidence for a theory is irrelevant: of course it is highly relevant, provided it could have been negative, provided the entire procedure is not rigged so as to ensure that negative findings are silenced. Can psychoanalytic procedure gather its positive evidence in a way which satisfies this requirement, or does it control its own database in a way which forever

precludes it? That is the question.

Gay believes that the reply to this charge is already to be found in Freud. Part of the rebuttal hinges on the fact that analysts do not merely repudiate analysts' denials as "resistance": they are also frequently suspicious of analysts' willing acquiescence. The Cunning of Unreason has many forms, and docility is one of them. A "patient who . . . unhesitatingly accepts all of his analyst's interpretations may be defending his neurosis far more tenaciously, because far more subtly, than an analyst whose resistance is out in the open".

No doubt this is a correct account of analysts' procedure. The force of the notion of the Unconscious is that it devalues all inner certainties, suspends them, renders them suspect. A person under this shadow is at the mercy of whatever procedures may be available (if any) for restoring at least some orientation. In exactly the same logical predicament, Descartes taught that clear and distinct ideas alone could help us recover our footing. Freud proposed the very opposite: our unclear and indistinct free-associations were to be the unique telescope to the realm which must now concern us most. The initial pulling of the rug from under the patient's confidence, obliging him to adopt the recipe as the only way back, would not work if only his denials were devalued, so that he could find his way back to confidence very simply and quickly by assenting to all suggestions. Exigent masters are never content with rapid and easy submission.

Hence any formulation of the supremely important "Heads I win, tails you lose" charge, which would assume that the analyst complacently welcomes all and any positive confirmations from the patient, must be an oversimplification. The analyst may even refrain from discounting all denials as "resistance". What is crucial is that he always remains free to do either of these things, and that no rules exist which could determine when he may or may not do it. His position is unassailable - whenever he wishes it to be such. There is no court of

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appeal outside the system which could damn his practice. It is this which makes the system untestable, but it does not preclude *ex gratia* self-correction, even volatility, within the system. Such volatility is indeed conspicuously present. But the data-base which is invoked for any internal correction remains firmly under the control of the system and its guardian guild. As Gay candidly puts it, "both the analyst and, once he has been initiated into the mysteries [sic], the patient must read elusive clues . . .".

Contrary to what Gay suggests, Popper's criterion of science does not hinge merely on the formal, logical asymmetry between confirmation and refutation of generalizations. (Negative instances disprove, but positive ones fail to prove.) Hence it does not crumble because refutations are never final, either. It is, indeed, true that the force of a refuting counter-example always hinges on additional theoretical assumptions, some of which may

later turn out to be false, so that the initially demolished theory may revive.

This, however, does not affect the really important insight behind Popper's criterion. Mankind is given to two kinds of cognitive system: one whose constituents reproduce and maintain themselves by controlling their own data; and another, with but one member, which lives dangerously by *not* controlling its own data, but which on the contrary allows its claims to be judged independently. It so happens that systems of the first kind are stagnant cognitively and engender social hierarchies, whereas the latter is veriginously cumulative in cognitive terms, but socially unsupportive or positively distressing. The charge against psycho-analysis is that it claims to be part of the latter, in other words to belong to science, but in fact constitutes a secularized, naturalistic version of the former, of the old cognitively stagnant and socially supportive belief sys-

tems. This ambiguous location is of course the secret of its success. How strange that a historian of the Enlightenment should be so smitten by a repudiation of the Enlightenment – and one articulated in its own idiom!

Gay makes great play with the individuality and diversity of human motivation and conduct, but he does not really face the problem of how this insistence can be squared with Freud's alleged discovery of valid generalizations. Given the licence which the concept of the Unconscious grants to those who are "initiated into the mysteries" to determine which conduct falls under which concept, the obvious danger is that the generalizations are vacuous. The data can be slotted into whichever categories ensure the survival of the generalizations.

For real testing, conduct would have to be characterized independently of the theory, and the theory scrutinized subsequently. But this

cannot happen: according to the theory the correct characterization of conduct is possible only by means of interpretation of unconscious material, accessible exclusively to a technique which, however, is intimately linked to the theory tested. The technique, furthermore, is applied by members of a guild defined by its commitment to the said theory. Psychoanalysis allows its contentions to be tested, not by publicly available evidence which it ignores, but by depth-material decoded by itself. Can conceptual incest go further?

Gay makes some good points in his discursive book: I like his observation that "reductionism" ought not to be a term of abuse but that, on the contrary, it is "a thoroughly reputable scientific procedure". But I am a dubious missionary will not convert many sceptics, whether in philosophy or history or the social sciences.

"black art" proves of no help at all.

Is there then no "serviceable function" to the psychoanalytic critic? I differ from Gay not only in my view of criticism, but also in my view of psychoanalysis, and indeed of art. I would defend the unfashionable view of the literary critic, proposed by Roger Scruton, a reader with taste, judgment and "a certain responsiveness to literature", who adds remarks to readers who are not the necessarily involved in the academic or professional study of literature. It is not necessary such a critic to go along with Freud's "raulic" model of mental functioning, which after all, was derived from a very partial reading of the nineteenth-century psychiatric

processes. Good art never issues from reason and logic alone: it springs from the imagination, and involves intuition, imagery, symbolism and metaphor. Predictably, therefore, given his model of mind, Freud felt compelled when confronted with the problem of art to either to categorize it as "neurotic", or to "down his arms" altogether.

But Rycroft has argued that, Freud notwithstanding, there is no reason why we should see the primary and secondary processes as necessarily or normally opposed, and that Freud talk about two different kinds of "energy" circulating within the mind is misleading. He does not believe there is an inevitable conflict between the ego and uncontrollable, destructive, instinctual "impulses" located within a hypostasized "Unconscious". Rycroft suggests both the primary and secondary processes are present from the beginning of life, and both appear to be necessary at every stage of development for healthy, happy and creative living. Both are adaptive.

Such an account of mental functioning provides a more satisfactory basis from which to understand human creativity than the Freudian attempt to derive it from the repressed sexual or libidinal life. For one thing, the approach seems to open up the possibility of psychoanalysis of *form* rather than of *content*. Despite Freud's appeal to psychoanalysis, Rycroft has suggested that psychoanalysis is better understood as a kind of eschatology or theory of biological meaning. And I think that it can be a distinct advantage to the critic to be upon developing "a certain kind of responsiveness to literature" if he is able to recognize the aspects of human thought and behaviour which simply incomprehensible.

Interrogating history's secrets

Valentine Cunningham

PETER VANSITTART
Aspects of Feeling
251pp. Peter Owen. £10.95.
0720606373

Aunt Janet, gazing into the orchard, mentioned swimming at Lyme, and Roger, still more agreeable, said that she had shown him the waves doing their best to confirm what Mrs Woolf had written of them. Yet though he smiled, Janet did not. Della was anxious, imagining Mrs Woolf, until Sir Harley offered her a chocolate.

Thus, early on, Peter Vansittart knowingly settles his central cast of three children, Della, Graham and Bayard, wards of smooth, clever Roger Kirkland and his mistress Janet – manipulative presiders over a sort of lesser Cliveden Set – into their task of paying sick tribute to *The Waves*.

As with Virginia Woolf's brood, we follow Vansittart's trio while they grow up – out of pre-war childhood, through the Second World War and the post-war austerities and on into the lush 1960s. Della becomes a writer, Graham a schoolmaster and assistant to back-

room string-puller Kirkland, Bayard a still more shadowy researcher and publicist. But loyalty to the earlier novel amounts to much more than this. Like *The Waves*, *Aspects of Feeling* strives to make its people known by popping niftily in and out of their heads, seeking to couple the world and their impressions of it in an adroit marriage. The result, too, is school-of-Mrs Woolf: the sense that selves and world still evade being known, for all the dazzling insights and glittering scraps the reader is granted. This gappy and flawed informativeness is confirmed in *The Waves* by the boy Percival's disappearance and death. Here, the boy Bayard, like Percival the preoccupying centre and point of reference of the others' consciousness, astute and most wised-up of the three, remains off-stage for most of the novel's length, and finally reappears from the zone of obscure rumour and busy speculation only to be bumped off, mysterious to the end, by hooded assassins.

Aspects of Feeling is, however, more than just a late tribute to Virginia Woolf's brand of modernist scepticism, not least because the questions of how literature interrogates selves and things and seeks to make them known are

bolting tightly onto questions of historical epistemology, the knowability of the past.

Vansittart's prose is quite the most greedy for experience and history of any novelist now writing in England. Its efforts to engorge things, places and events are gargantuan. Vansittart's paragraphs will never be a mere collection of decorous annotations. They are richly overdone, stuffed to the gills with overflowing abundance. Graham, for instance, produces a school *Twelfth Night*:

Groping for advice to which he never listened, he envisaged not evanescent Illyria with comedy heeled as moonlight but England, half-pagan, with effulgent goddess always off-stage yet never wholly absent, pain-wracked and nervous, yet dancing, humming, jesting, a living refinement of gods and blacks. Nothing, he insisted irritably to the stolid, puzzled or rebellious, must be either strange or familiar. The scented, gemmed hand reaching for wine or rapier had once been a claw, might be so again. Orsino, a second-eleven Leicester or Essex, governed a realm which was at once mood and brute substance, with clowns thrown adrift in midwinter. Behind languid respondents and jovial swillers hung withered leaves and frost. Rare song and high conceits could not disperse bear-pit and madhouse. An atmosphere ambiguous as goddess and ruler, to be touched with archaic remnants: sexes exchanging clothes to confuse demons, a forgotten echo of blood sacrifice, a reminder of hell. Without knowing why, he impulsively ordained that Feste must wear a feathered cloak.

Purple in colour, no doubt; purple never enjoyed better patches than it does here. But it is all vexingly unreliable for moral nourishment and for the keeping of faith with necessary truth-telling. The literary scene in which Della's poems seek to make their way, assisted by the cannily flexible Allweather, is presented as chock-full of malice, pretence and caprice. Della's late breakthrough, when she is acclaimed by the quondam back-biters as feminist heroine and humane mouthpiece against Stalinist barbarities, is not only quite unexpected, it's based on a lengthily messy and

wilfully unhistorical poem that "eschewed chronology and historical fact, was a scatter of contrasts . . . a threat to the order of desk and paper, with manic savagery, extravagant largesse, a gambler's joking despair, comet brilliance". It's said to conduct its historical analysis on the flyover method.

History eludes Graham and Bayard as well. The events that preoccupy them – what really went on in the Katyn Forest, what was actually done to the White Russians returned to Stalin by Churchill and the Allies – stay murkily unravelled. They are shown to be as difficult to know and record as Graham's hinted passions for boys or Bayard's parentage and what he did in the war. Of course, the novel has some truths leaking out and being elicited. The hand of Kirkland – now Sir Roger – eventually proves to be one that signed the papers that did thousands of anti-Stalinists certain harm. But Malvolio, in the play Graham directed – a man traduced by a writing and locked away in mystifying darkness, there to be mocked by a fraudulent priest – remains the novel's more potentially emblematic figure.

Fate-tales in history, the novel insists, easily get trivialized into mere fairy-tales. Historical creeds, like the Christianity of Graham's scathing clerical colleague, collapse into debunkable stories. Those hapless creatures clubbed and bayoneted into the cattle trucks bound for Stalin's East fade, for Graham, into dim, distant and forgettable nightmares.

And yet, for all this kind of despond, Vansittart's efforts to grapple with history and to out-manoeuvre its tendency to opaqueness command admiration, even if his prose is given to such baroque, even Carlylean excesses. What's more, a prevailing indignation with the self-interested secretiveness of politicians – the sowing discontent with the secrecy of their texts, if not altogether with that of Mrs Woolf's kind – is most cheering to watch in its impressively robust action.

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UNIVERSITY OF California PRESS
126 Buckingham Palace Road London SW1W 9SD

Daniel Weiss, who died prematurely in 1976, taught literature at New York University, the University of Washington, and San Francisco State University. During his lifetime, he published only one book of criticism: *Oedipus in Nottingham*, a study of D. H. Lawrence. *The Critic Agonistes* consists of a selection from his published and unpublished talks and papers. Some of these are concerned with the theory and practice of Freudian literary criticism; others are applications of it. The editors, Solomon and Stephen Arkin, have included texts on Ernest Hemingway, William Faulkner and Saul Bellow. There is also an extract from the book on Lawrence, and a celebration of the "underground" vision of Dostoevsky, a man who, according to Weiss, "chose to live in his own darkness rather than lose himself in the anthill".

In their introduction, the editors imply that Weiss was not as other Freudian critics commonly are. They tell us he read and wrote "as an authentic ironist, whose quiet wit, specially cultivated sense of the ridiculous, and admiration for the comic . . . let him laugh both at heavy texts and at heavy interpretations of texts". He certainly was capable of a fitness of style – "One has thrown out the baby with the birth trauma" – which would not have been well received at meetings of the Vienna Psychoanalytic Society. He was also given to "sensitive" asides which hinted at tastes rather different from those of a thoroughgoing, psychological determinist. "I know that great art consists of the intuitive grasp of the nature of things", he wrote, "and that inferior art is the studied grasp of these relations. I know that *Hamlet* survives as poetry more readily than it will survive as an Oedipal problem play. I prefer fingerprints to blueprints, and perhaps for this God will forgive me."

But the reader should not be taken in by such niceties of sense or sensibility. For Weiss was, at bottom, a paleo-Freudian of the old school. Freudian "metapsychology" was for him not only a witchcraft, or black art, as he liked to call it, but also an alchemy through which he could metamorphose the dross and drudgery of common-or-garden campus criticism into gold. The reader is made constantly aware that behind the vagaries of his prose style lurked the lumbering presence of a crude version of Freud's "psychic apparatus": for he shared with Freud a "hydraulic" model of human mental functioning.

Weiss liked to conceive of the work of art as subsisting in the tensions between three concentric circles. In the outer circle was the work of literature as a social phenomenon; in the middle was the work as a personal phe-

nomenon, "newly born in the artist's consciousness, a product of autobiography and craft, revisions and calculations". But in the innermost ring the work of literature "exists, if it exists at all, as an inchoate, almost a biological phenomenon, a horde of urgencies in search of an outlet, levels below personality where the artist becomes *genus nervosus*, a mythical, or a psychological essence". He argued that the outermost circle of the work bore the same relation to the inner circles as a reliquary of silver and gold and precious stones might bear to the skull it encloses. If the outer circle was an aesthetic elaboration, it was none the less from the inner circle that the elaboration issued.

Freudian criticism, Weiss believed, "begins with the assumption that the creative process involves always a *demonic unconscious* whose contributions to the work of art are beyond the options of the artistic consciousness, and indeed often seem to represent all that is antithetical to the artist's avowed intentions". Weiss saw the contents of this demonic unconscious as an agitated brew of "wishes, impulses, instinctual aims, and objects that the ego has abandoned in the interests of its own safety". The Freudian critic, he argued, "proposes that the work of art, both as product and process, performs the serviceable function of counteracting instinctual excitement, specifically sexual excitement, in both the artist and his audience, by binding it into forms which do not in themselves possess any direct erotic appeal". Weiss's "black art" involved a relatively straightforward incorporation of Freud's deterministic model of mental functioning into the everyday discourse of literary criticism.

Freud was ambivalent about where art fitted into his scheme of things. Though he once accused this artist of being "in rudiments an introvert, not far removed from neurosis . . . oppressed by excessively powerful instinctual needs", he later confessed that "before the problem of the creative artist analysis must, alas, lay down its arms". Freud's own writing contains no adequate theory of art – not surprisingly, perhaps, as he was a self-confessed "philistine". Those who, following Ernst Kris, see Freud's *Jokes and their Relation to the Unconscious* as containing a proto-Freudian theory of aesthetics are wishful thinkers.

The objections to Freudian criticism, as a genre, have been frequently voiced; they have been rather less frequently answered. Freudian criticism seems to lack an object. This can hardly be the work of art as such, since, by its very nature, such criticism has nothing to contribute on formal or technical matters. Freudian criticism falls silent concerning the part played in the creative process by conventions, tradition and materials – none of which are subjective products of intrapsychic processes. Predictably, Freudian criticism cannot contribute to the evaluation of a work: it is as happy with the lapidary "this is happy" as with the lapidary "this is unhappy" as with the lapidary "this is happy".

But not ought its object to be the characters in a text, or a picture. The dangers of such psychologizing of fictional individuals have been widely acknowledged ever since L. C.

Knights asked, "How Many Children Had Lady Macbeth?" An alternative tendency has been for such criticism to treat the work of art as analogous to a neurotic symptom, and to take as its real object "the mind of the artist" – at which point, of course, it really ceases to be criticism. Nor can the object of Freudian criticism legitimately be described as the relations between the work of art and the mind of the artist. For as Charles Rycroft once pointed out, psychoanalytic interpretations are of precious little value when they are brought forward in the absence of a responsive analysis. In a clinical situation, a patient responds to the interpretation – accepting, evading, denying or vehemently rejecting it. The nature of the patient's affective response, rather than the necessity of the interpretation itself, lets the analyst know whether or not he is on the right track. The absence of such a response no doubt accounts for the fanciful hollowness of so many psychoanalytic readings of art and literature.

Weiss was aware of some of these difficulties. He refers to the work of Ella Sharpe, an academic literary critic who became a psychoanalyst. In her "capable hands", he argued, "the tragedy of King Lear becomes a tragedy of bowel control, a fantasy from Shakespeare's anal period; The loose riotous knights, which Goneril and Regan deplore, are his faeces, and his several daughters and sons-in-law represent aspects of the parent image." No doubt speaking for himself, Weiss comments that "we are astounded by the skill" of this interpretation, but none the less pauses to ask where the poem (*sic*) has gone. "The discipline", he complains, "is not criticism but psychotherapy directed at the artist."

But Weiss's own interpretations were often of a similar kind. The work of art, we remember, performs the "serviceable function" of "counteracting sexual excitement", and binding it into "forms which do not in themselves possess any direct erotic appeal". What then of those works of art which *do* possess direct erotic appeal – no mean issue for a student of D. H. Lawrence? Eroticism veils eroticism: the Freudian critic can still sniff out the polymorphous perversity which lurks behind adult coupling. "The sexual descriptions in Lawrence's novels", according to Weiss, "contain always the imagery of what is recognizable as coitus anxiety, which implies a neurotic regression to some prior state, before the genitals have assumed primacy as the sexual organ par excellence, when for the child the pleasurable organ is the mouth, which does not give but receives through sucking." So Weiss reveals Lawrence as "the neurotic Oedipal man", for whom the nursing situation was the paradisaical directed at the artist. Nor does it answer the psychological issue with which, as readers of Lawrence's novels, we ought to be most concerned. For the world abounds with "neurotic Oedipal men", and it is no revelation that Lawrence was of their number. What we want to know is why this "neurotic Oedipal man" did not merely develop "my, a taste for Neill's Condensed Milk of his own thumb, but succeeded in writing great novels. And here, just where he might expect much of it, Weiss's

Outrage and outcasts

Tim Dooley

DAVID CONSTANTINE
Davies
115pp. Newcastle-upon-Tyne: Bloodaxe.
£7.95.
0906427916

David Constantine's two collections of poetry, *A Brightness to Cast Shadows* and *Watching for Dolphins*, have been praised for their sensuality and compassion and for their classical poise. Constantine's unabashed seriousness has marked him out as a very European writer – an impression confirmed by his first novel *Davies*, which, with its documentary neutrality of tone and muted outrage at injustice, recalls, for example, the Bôll of *The Lost Honour of Katharina Blum* much more than any contemporary British novelist's work. Constantine's novel focuses, however, on a figure from the byways of British history and on a peculiarly British theme: the application of punitive sanctions to the criminalized poor.

The novel's central character, David Davies (1849–1929), received during his lifetime prison sentences totalling sixty-one years for a succession of minor offences, of which the most common was pilfering from church offertory boxes in the Welsh border counties of Cheshire, Shropshire, Denbigh, Montgomery and Flint. His brief moments of fame came when, in 1911, Winston Churchill, at that time a Liberal Home Secretary temporarily interested in prison reform, raised his case in the House of Commons, and then, later in the same year, when his abscondment from the farm near Ruthin where he was paroled provided farcical ammunition for Churchill and Lloyd George's Conservative opponents. "A man of experience and a fabulist to boot", Davies found that romantic stories attached themselves to him. His first crime was said to have been the theft of a white shirt from a hedgerow on the way to a dance. He became known as "The Dartmoor Shepherd", and

"parties of tourists . . . would have their outings rendered unforgettable by the sight of him".

David Constantine tells Davies's story obliquely, moving backwards and forwards in time, cautiously sifting what was fact or fiction in the tales surrounding Davies and filtering his story through three distinct narrators, themselves social outcasts. The Master of the Workhouse in Llanfyllin (where Davies ended his days, only a few miles from his birthplace) sets out to be Davies's historian, to establish the pathetic facts behind the legend. But he is himself a pathetic figure, an intellectualizing outsider never at home in the village he chose to live in, deeply mistrusted for his pacifism in the First World War and suspected of having a pecuniary interest in his once-celebrated charge, Betty, a young unmarried mother who first knew Davies when she was a child, gives him sympathy and support in old age, sensing a similarity in their situations as victims of villages where "Everyone knew everything. . . . They were never happy until things had gone wrong, and the worse things went the happier they were."

Perhaps the most interesting of the narrators is Jeremiah Bone, Davies's crippled companion and confidant. Bone's affliction causes "general disgust and hilarity"; his words are taken for an "almost inaudible and utterly incomprehensible" mumble; but Constantine makes him a Caliban in luxury of language as well as in deformity of physique, giving Bone's words a literary allusiveness and lyricism appropriate to a vision which is sometimes sublime:

Hospitable Julian, he recalled, had embraced the leprous stranger, had warmed him in his bed, . . . and the love of Dai, in befriending so strange a thing, he would not rate much below Julian's, the lonely ferryman. . . . Dai had spoken of nothing so much as the infinite need for love, how fathomless the fall in every man, and in the figures of his speech, so Bone recalled, there was both a pit of longing that all the willing hands under the sun . . . might never fill, and a well of pity out of whose depths a man might toll a life-time and never draw to his sight the crystal buckets.

Eastward ho

Simon Rae

D. J. TAYLOR
Great Eastern Land: From the notebooks of David Castell
197pp. Secker and Warburg. £9.50.
043657625X

David Castell has established himself in an anonymous village somewhere in the anonymous Far East. He lives alone in a large house, tended erratically by a servant called Caro. He has no friends and few acquaintances. He does, however, frequent Dr Peelgood's, a bar-cum-brothel run by the mysterious Mr Mouzookseem, and indeed is having a quiet drink there when, on the first page of the novel, it is raided – a result of the escalating feud between Mr Mouzookseem and the Commissioner of Police, arising from the strictly limited supplies of contraband brandy available from a local racketeer. Mr Mouzookseem is carted off to gaol and beaten up. On his release, he disappears, having delivered himself of a prophecy of doom.

This seems to be fulfilled when things turn mysteriously nasty in the village. There is the case of the poisoned orange, with the Commissioner of Police attempting to ally fears by stolidly eating through a vast representative pile of the offending fruit in full public view in the bazaar. The Commissioner later comes to a mysterious but undoubtedly unpleasant end, and the village lapses into rumour-ridden anarchy.

What is David Castell doing through all this? Writing it down, of course – compiling the "notebooks" from which the novel is supposed to derive. This would be perfectly all right, were he not also writing down his recollections of a childhood in East Anglia, and an undergraduate career at Oxford, chapters of which are interspersed throughout the Asian narrative.

Mr Castell's parents are no less boring than other people's parents usually are. His father

(in insurance) is a Freemason, a local antiquarian, and a fanatical genealogist. His theories as to the family's descent from some line of Saxon kings are so excruciating that the author actually has to apologize for them.

There's a disclaimer for the Oxford chapters as well. "This is not a novel about Oxford, which has been done before and better". This is not worth the paper it's printed on, and we are soon plunged into a world of pretentiousness and affectation which stirs the very worst memories of university life. The activities of Fowler, one of Castell's friends, elevate him, despite their stereotypical normality, to the standing of "a college eccentric" – "a distinctive category", as a parenthetical note assures us. This status is also accorded to Page, Castell's other friend, though only after he has got drunk and slashed his wrists at the end of one of Fowler's "legendary" parties.

Both these characters, and others – there's a smarmy don called Mr Mortimer, and a tiresomely sophisticated girl called "Miss Knox" – speak and act exclusively for effect. This is something they have in common with the author's prose, a mish-mash of styles, encompassing such arch Victorianisms as appeals to "my readers", a gratuitous parody of the opening of *Bleak House*, and a general tendency towards that self-advertently pedantic mode of over-elaboration beloved of posers and schoolmasters – "Noises coming from the darkening quadrangle hinted at the recent completion of sporting activities", calling to mind no one so strongly as Bertrand Welch. A more foreboding reminder of *Lucky Jim* comes with Page's habit of making "what he called his Birmanian play face. This consisted of narrowing his eyebrows, composing his lips in a grotesque pout, and affecting a horrifying glazed expression." The market in funny faces was cornered once and for all by Jim Dixon thirty years ago.

All this is a pity, because the Asian half of the novel is promising. The writing is sharper, less self-consciously clever, and an altogether better vehicle for D. J. Taylor's genuine comic gift.

Waiting for the future

David Montrose

TOBIAS WOLFF
Back in the World
221pp. Cape. £8.95.
0224023438

The title of Tobias Wolff's second collection of stories comes from a passage in "Soldier's Joy", in which his protagonist, Hooper, reminisces about the certainty found on combat duty in Vietnam:

We didn't know it then. We used to talk about how when we got back in the world we were going to do this and we were going to do that. Back in the world we were going to have it made. But ever since then it's been nothing but confusion.

Hooper has remained a soldier, hoping he will some day recapture that order and clarity. Meanwhile, he resentfully suffers the "chicken-shit" and "clutter" of his present life, treating it as a sideshow to the real thing.

Several other principal characters experience similar situations, contending with dissatisfaction while awaiting futures that will probably never emerge. Hooper pursues solace in memories; Jean, a boredom-dogged teenager ("Coming Attractions"), resorts to fantasy, imagining an *alter ego* whose X-rated adventures she palely duplicates through shoplifting and prank phone-calls. Charlie, of "Our Story Begins", is another fantasist. A would-be writer, he moved to San Francisco, aiming to join its literary set. Instead, friendless, he works as an ill-paid busboy, his novel universally rejected; in letters home he evokes brilliant companions and deep conversations. "Desert Breakdown, 1968" demonstrates how potent dreams of success can be. *En route* for Los Angeles to seek a showbiz career, Mark receives a vague offer of an unspecified job with a film crew shooting in Arizona. On the strength of this – the small beginning that will, he imagines, lead to the top – he is fully prepared to ditch his pregnant wife and stepson as superfluous baggage. The most impressive of this group of stories, "The Missing Person", concerns Father Leo, who took the cloth intending to become a missionary among the Aleutian Indians. Assigned instead to Seattle, he undertakes various minor duties with a conspicuous lack of impact. Only patience and a

sense of vocation – though both are wanting – prevent him leaving the priesthood. Then he finds unexpected success fund-raising for an impoverished convent; at last, it seems, he has attained usefulness and dignity. Things, however, quickly turn sour.

In Wolff's world, even established success has a dark side. Whereas most of his protagonists look to a brighter tomorrow, in "The Post Are Always With Us", Russell does the reverse. Right now, he is a "boy wonder" with a Californian computer firm; he earns more than he needs, drives a Porsche. But it all rests on his ability to keep making important connections. An encounter with Dave, a washed-up former hot-shot, intensifies his awareness that he might not be able to do that indefinitely. In "The Rich Brother", the cloud on the horizon for Pete, a prosperous realtor, is his unwelcome younger brother, Donald, whom he has long subsidized and watched over. And, because the peculiar guilt Pete feels at their disparity means and competence, he is fated to do so forever.

An exponent of the "dirty realism" whose most prominent practitioner is Raymond Carver, Wolff excels at creating people and moods. This he usually achieves by showing accreted detail, rather than telling. Consequently, his longer stories tend to be his strongest. Certainly, "Say Yes" and "Sister", at six and ten pages respectively – are the most noteworthy here; "The Missing Person" and "Desert Breakdown, 1968" (thirty-six pages each) are the pick of the volume. This book, in turn, surpassed by Wolff's fifty-four page novella, *The Barracks Thief*, which appeared in *Granta* 8 and won the 1984 PEN/Faulkner Award, for "the year's most notable first work".

Any reservations about *Back in the World* must centre on Wolff's style. In his hands, dirty realism proves a somewhat less flexible instrument than in those of Carver or, say, Fredrick Barthelme; he also lacks their quirky humour. The narrower range of tones he obtains in his precision and plainness shown up in his collection – unlike its predecessor, *Hunger for the Snow* – which contains only stories narrated in the third person (*The Barracks Thief* included throughout in first- and third-person narration). This shortcoming is hardly unique – Wolff's stories are generally admirable – but it does mean that they work better individually than in bulk.

Acting upwardly

Gavin Ewart

PETER DE VRIES
The Trick of Noon
233pp. Gollancz. £8.95.
0375 037458

Peter De Vries's prose has something in common with P.G. Wodehouse's: "Worshipping from afar is hard work and long hours" (the ideal expressed in terms of the material); Shakespeare is also alluded to, as very frequently in Wodehouse, but in a different way. "Friends and countrymen, six months ago I'd not even have been allowed in this country club." The title is from *Roméo and Juliet*, as a character tells you late in the book; but you're supposed to know. This is humour for the literate. As well as the Wodehouse thing (demotic/learned) there is a strand of Kingsley Amis interwoven ("a woman under a hat slightly less in size than the table-parasol") and a neat poetic elegance. This, roughly, is the way it's done – very pleasantly. As in Dickens, as in Amis, comic exactitude and scientific description of simple action, a kind of mock heroic, is the style.

But even well-written novels, of this kind anyway, must have a story. This one, full of class implications, concerns Eddie Tseters, who makes instructional sex films (hard porn to you) and has ambitions to be upwardly mobile. As the producer, voice-over narrator, and actor in close-up in a sexual-educational work called *Come As You Are*, he is embarrassed when this is shown at a drunken party to the most sophisticated and beautiful people in Connecticut, with two of whom he has himself

already performed in close-up, privately.

Just as uneducated people in Britain love the word "penultimate", Eddie has aspirations towards a *Reader's Digest* vocabulary. He is an Arthur Daley of small-screen porn, spilling out umbrage ("u-m-b-r-i-l-l-a-g-e") to the hotel lot, believing that *Swann's Way* is a ballet set to music by Tchaikovsky. He is disgusted by crude technician associates who say things like "the scene where she opens the telegram while he's barking up the canyon" and, even more unrefined, "All right, let's go for the tapestry" (this is Krumholz, his barbarian director). Eddie, on the other hand, meeting his girl friend at a secret rendezvous, appeals to her in more highbrow terms: "Associate with me openly, like Jesus did with the Republicans and sinners." One minor character, Chitrouk, is master of epigrams, some of them good: "I have read nothing by Butler-Lytton can give me a solid sense of accomplishment." The plotting is ingenious and satisfactory, nobody gets hurt, and there's a happy ending.

In this novel the moral status of porn is largely neglected. You might have to be "liberal" to the extent of thinking that porn is, or can be, funny – or, even, that sex itself might seem funny from the outside – before you really enjoy the book, but that's all. It's possible to make fun of sex, which after all, for the purposes of the novel, has its share of beauty; and it's possible to make fun of old age, which has its share of sadness. De Vries does both. In the practical old-age-manship of his characters can be rather lovely. Who has not met people proud of being seventy-nine or eighty-three, for example, though this made them very special? The novel is very entertaining, possibly best up to the point, tying up ends is always difficult.

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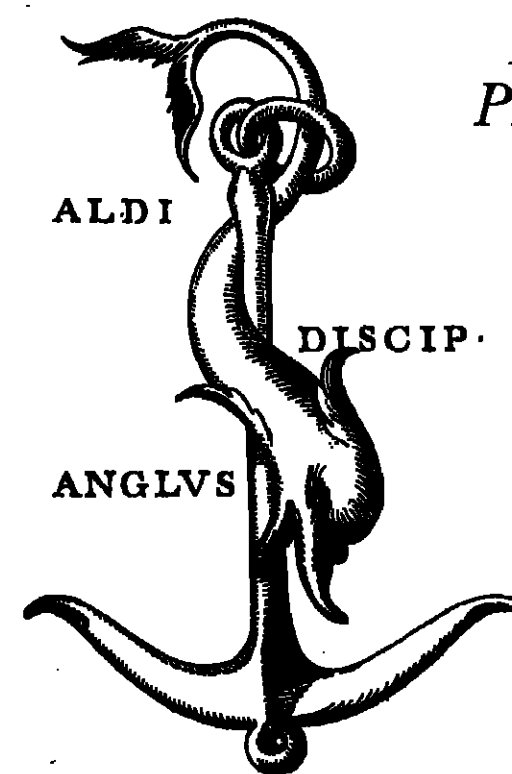
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A discourse of the dissensions

Keith Walker

DAVID NOKES
Jonathan Swift: A hypocrite reversed
427pp. Oxford University Press. £14.95.
0 19 812834 7

"A hypocrite reversed": the subtitle to David Nokes's excellent new biography of Swift refers to Bolingbroke's insight, reported by Thomas Sheridan, that Swift's "hatred to hypocrisy" was such that "no mortal ever took more pains . . . to conceal his [good qualities] or even to put on the semblance of their contraries . . .". Of course, as Nokes shows, there is plenty of evidence of Swift's own "hypocrisy", along with evidence of his deviousness, unreliability, lack of truthfulness, guile and sheer bad faith when it suited him, but Nokes does not allow these evidences to dominate the picture. In a way, his biography is exemplary, asking, by implication, how many readers could withstand an investigation conducted by so many witnesses over so many years and in so many circumstances and still emerge with the glowing endorsement "essential honesty and humanity" which is Nokes's final word, and which few readers of this sympathetic study will dissent from.

On the whole, Swift's nineteenth-century biographers saw him as a monster, "gibbering shrieks, and gnashing imprecations against mankind—tearing down all shreds of modesty, past all sense of manliness and shame; filthy in thought, furious, raging, obscene". The enormous biography by the late Irvin Ehrenpreis, published over twenty-one years from 1962 to 1983, cleared away many of the fables that had accreted about Swift's life. Nokes's aim is the more modest one of giving a balanced life, comprehensible in one volume, based for the most part on published material. The work of a horde of scholars has ensured that there isn't likely to be anything of importance lying undiscovered in Record Offices. To this task Nokes brings an intimate knowledge of the work of Swift and his circle.

Even after the thoroughgoing work of Ehrenpreis, some aspects of Swift's life remain obscure: we still don't know whether he was married or not (a circumstance rarely in doubt for most subjects of a biography). He was born in Ireland and lived there most of his life, making some dozen visits to England, for periods which together total some nineteen years, but the precise number of such visits, and their precise duration, are still matters of dispute. Probably we shall never be sure of the exact canon of Swift's work, so given was he to mystification and dissimulation on the subject. Still, the main outlines of his life are not in dispute, and for some periods—such as that covered by the so-called *Journal to Stella*—the account is very full indeed. Nokes is not concerned with the outer edges of Swift's career. To the reader expecting to find "a fresh analysis of *Parnassus*, the *Great*, or of a new insight into *The Dying Words of Ebenezer Ellison*", he writes, "I leave those as bones for others to chew upon". The Olympian tone is characteristic. "Biographical critics," he tells us

noting that [Gulliver] was educated at Temple's old college, Emmanuel, see this as a source for Swift's ambivalence toward him. Freudian critics note with glee that he is apprenticed to "good master Bates", which may offer an explanation for some of his sexual and excremental obsessions. Others believe that Gulliver's profession, as a surgeon, indicates that his travels should be seen as exploratory operations on the posterior, if not the conscience, of the world. Why is he telling us all this? To indicate the absurdities that he is avoiding? The pun on "master Bates" is (mildly) interesting for this childish glee with which Swift tips toes towards it: "my good master Mr Bates" (five lines of text), "Mr Bates, my master" (five lines of text), then finally: "but my good master Bates dying".

Nokes arranges his materials in five parts, deftly listed: after a brief prelude provided by Swift's last return to Ireland in 1727, the first section, "The Confused Spirit" (a phrase from an early letter), deals briskly with Swift's early life and his early poetry, in which Nokes, like many others, sees little promise. Part Two is entitled "First Fruits", a reference not only to the tortuous and long-drawn-out attempt to gain for the Irish clergy the profits of the first

year's benefices which had been remitted to the English clergy, but also to Swift's early beginnings as a writer of stature.

This section contains a searching account of Swift's *Discourse of the Contests and Dissensions in Athens and Rome*, a hilarious account of the story—wonderfully fresh however often it is repeated—of the elaborate hoax Swift played on John Partridge the almanac-maker, and a severe account of Swift's *Project for the Advancement of Religion*.

Robespierre himself could not have formulated a more thoroughgoing apparatus for ensuring the tyranny of virtue. There is something distasteful about finding Swift as the author of a tract of which any puritan fanatic, or dictator, might have been proud, with its dedication to narrow principles of orthodoxy, and with its paraphernalia of thought-police and informers.

The third section, "The Life of a Spider", takes its title from Swift's aphorism, "It is the life of a spider", and covers the years in England from 1710 to 1714, when Swift, who many years after claimed to have been a lifelong Whig, hobnobbed with, and wrote propaganda for, the Tory prime minister, partly in the hope of gaining preferment in the English Church. Swift's humiliating position as a proud dependant was a position he had experienced before at Sir William Temple's and is pitiful to contemplate.

Queen Anne's death, and the coming of the Whig-inclined George I put an end to Swift's hopes in the English Church. Fortunately he had been made Dean of St Patrick's in Dublin before that. "The Dean and the Drapier" covers Swift's acceptance as an Irish patriot with his *Drapier's Letters* and ends with an account of *Gulliver's Travels*.

Swift's declining years, in Ireland, detailed in the fifth part, "The Tale of Slaves", are not pretty as he sinks into moroseness, alienation and loneliness. A typical work of these years is the strange *Directions to Servants*, which Nokes characterizes as "a handbook for domestic guerrilla war" (rather spoiling the effect of this by calling it, on the next page, "an anarchists' handbook compiled by the chief of police").

Leave a pail of dirty water with a mop in it, a coat-box, a bottle, a broom, a chamber-pot, and such other unsightly things, either in a blind entry, or upon the darkest part of the back stairs, that they may not be kept; and if people break their shins by trampling on them, it is their own fault.

Throughout, Nokes's comments on Swift's works are fresh and sensible. He uses Swift's obsessively autobiographical verse well. He keeps the "familiar obsessions with cleanliness, thrift, and the operations of the bowels" in proportion, not slighting them, nor claiming that denunciations of uncleanness were what a clergyman was expected to do anyway; nor letting these aspects dominate, or explain, Swift's life.

Nokes, perhaps wisely, admits to his record some stories about Swift which form part of the biographical tradition and which are dismissed

Myopic misgivings

David Womersley

PAUL ALKON and ROBERT FOLKENFELK
Samuel Johnson: Pictures and words
118pp. Los Angeles: William Andrews Clark Memorial Library.

Samuel Johnson: Pictures and words comprises two papers presented at the Clark Library Seminar in 1982. Paul Alkon's contribution, "Illustrations of *Rasselas* and Reader-Response Criticism", is an eloquent attempt to trace in the illustrations to various editions of *Rasselas* evidence of its readers' responses to it, concluding emphatically that "reader-response critics should consider illustrations where they are available".

There are some unhelped notions here. Before we affirm that particular illustrations throw light on the responses of the public, rather than of a mere individual, ought we not to find out, not only whether the edition in question was popular, but whether or not its popularity was increased (or at least not hin-



"Hanging Washing in Lord Portlaster's Chapel, St Audon, Dublin", a detail from an ink-and-wash sketch by George Peirle (1789-1866); reproduced from *Fifty Views of Ireland* by Catherine de Courcy and Ann Maher (64pp. National Gallery of Ireland. Paperback, £6.95. 0 903162 26 1).

by Ehrenpreis as being unprovable, "not because I necessarily believe them to be true" but "because they have played such an important part in the transmissions of Swift's reputation through the ages". Thus, he gives a cautious assent to Thomas Sheridan's account of Swift's secret marriage to Stella, on the ground that it makes sense of much of the other evidence. Odd though it is, it is no odder than much of Swift's life.

A problem, common to most biographies I would imagine, is what is to be done with the often spiky, lively, colourful witness whose account does not fit smoothly into the narrative. If the biographer chooses to reprint his witness entire, he risks degrading his own function to that of a mere editor, as well as perhaps giving greater prominence to those witnesses who are the most lively. If he paraphrases, he risks blandness. Nokes's text isn't innocent of telling anecdotes—he quotes at length one particularly vivid story from Spence—but in general he is reluctant to enliven his narrative with any and the like. Take the case of Laetitia Pilkington. Late in life Swift came to see her as "the most profligate whore" in England and Ireland, but her "chatty, anecdotal *Memoirs*" have "many vivid glimpses of Swift's declining years". By the time the Pilkingtons come in to the story, Nokes's manuscript must have been already bulky, but I regret he could not have

given some of these examples of how social awkward and unpredictable Swift could be. Nokes sticks very close to Swift's wretched letters for evidence of what he was doing and thinking. For pages at a time, the elegant chaste footnotes consist of a splatter of full and page references to the last quoted volume of *The Correspondence*. This close concentration of Swift's own view of events casts dangers, which Nokes skilfully avoids. His accounts of Swift's odd (to say the least) and tory entanglements with Jane Waring, Esther Johnson (Stella) and Hester Vanhomrigh (Vanessa) carry total conviction.

Nokes will have nothing to do with recent claims that Thomas Swift (a cousin) had a hand in the narrative sections of *A Tale of a Tub*; claim I have always thought made good sense of that dizzying work, and Thomas has only a shadowy existence here. Still, the cast of characters is very large indeed. There are no less than three William Kings, and the reader may have recourse to the index (which fortunately is excellent) to sort them out. In general the account is unruffled by controversy, so that the reader is denied the pleasure of assessing as such scholarly in-fighting as is to be seen in J. A. Downie's review of E. P. Lock's *The Politics of Gulliver's Travels* in a recent number of the *British Journal for Eighteenth Century Studies*.

dered) by its illustrations? I imagine that many of the editions Professor Alkon examined sold in spite of their embellishment; for the most part, the standard of draughtsmanship is rightly low. The "man eminent for his knowledge of the mechanical powers" and his unsuccessful attempt at flight seem to have caused particular problems: he appears with a withered right leg in figure 7 (a pathetic counterpart to the hermit with no neck in figure 8); doing a headstand on the surface of the water in figure 6; and disguised as a nun in figure 1 (a whisper of transsexualty echoed by the pregnant *Rasselas* of figure 24).

I make the point not to jeer but to inquire whether, given such fundamental ineptitude, we can convincingly impute imaginative integrity to these illustrations. It is simply not true that "the contemporary illustrations . . . look good. All the pictures . . . are at least the response of adults engaging other adults with values of importance." Despite a lucid style and instructive moments (the discussion of *Dinorah*; Cornelia Knight's sequel to *Rasselas* published in 1790, tells us about readers' responses with real precision), I could not compare doubts about Professor Alkon's central contention.

"Samuel Johnson and Art" is a more weighty piece. It is in part a catalogue of Johnson's scattered and generally incidental comments on art; but Robert Folkenflik is able to demonstrate an underlying coherence of attitudes. We all know that Johnson was myopic. Professor Folkenflik shows that he nevertheless appreciated the power of the pictorial, and his misgivings about that power's possible effects. Consequently the braced quality of Johnson's thought emerges well from this essay, in which neglected areas of the *oeuvre* are brought into the circle of debate, and new facts about Johnson's connection with the Society of Artists are ascertained.

One could hardly ask for more; and yet in this trim volume one misses the note of urgency and the pressure of argument which distinguish the most exciting research. Finely produced, the book supplies instead a form of cultured conversation, with all its elegances, changes and longueurs.

Displacement at the top

John Rogister

EVELYNE LEVER
Louis XVI
695pp. Paris: Fayard. 150fr.
2121015457

There are three main shortcomings in this life of Louis XVI. First, it is not based on any archival research, as far as one can judge. Second, it takes no account of any Anglo-Saxon scholarship in its field. Third, the author's views on the role of institutions such as the *parlements* are tiresomely conventional and uncritical. However, such shortcomings do not mar a work that is remarkable in other respects, for it has the advantage of presenting a new, balanced, and ultimately convincing view of the character of Louis XVI. One had grown accustomed to seeing the king either as a weak and salient figure who died on the guillotine, the French Charles I, or else as the treacherous and stupid "gros coq" with an assured place in the French Revolutionary demography. Evelyn Lever dismisses these stereotypes. She does more. Whereas previous biographers of the king were harsh in their judgments of the queen, Marie Antoinette, the "evil genius" of the monarchy, Mme Lever gives a portrait of her which is sensitive and credible.

Her main thesis is that the king was "castrated" by his education. His elder brother, the sickly duke of Burgundy, was the favourite child of his parents, the dauphin (son of the debauched Louis XV), and the dauphine Marie-Joséphine of Saxony. As a gawky cadet, the duke of Berry was always made to feel inferior to his brother. Burgundy, possessed of an unusual intellectual precocity, was an appalling prig who was allowed to give lessons to the other siblings even on his deathbed. With the disappearance first of this sanctimonious brother and then of his father, Berry

became at the age of nine in 1765 the heir to the throne, a fact which the joyless dauphine was apt to forget as she wallowed in candle-lit widowhood, before dying herself two years later. Berry did not emerge unscathed from these experiences. Throughout his life he remained deeply suspicious of his immediate family, especially of his younger brother, the intelligent and calculating comte de Provence (later Louis XVIII). In addition to these personal considerations, the future king's tutor created a fatal confusion in his mind between the traditional concept of an absolute monarchy of divine right and fashionable notions of the natural equality of men and of a paternalistic approach to government. He instilled in him the view that a ruler should be indecisive only if he was not certain of being just or useful. Hunting was to be the chief royal pleasure: there were to be no mistresses and no bad books. According to Mme Lever, the contradictions of the reign were already present in the education of the ruler. Of his teachers, she writes: "ils lui ont imposé l'idée d'une monarchie paternelle tout en l'empêchant de connaître ou de comprendre les réalités de son temps."

Since he was conscious of his duties and aware of his inadequacies, it is surprising that Louis XVI achieved anything at all. Yet this shy man, afflicted with myopia, was self-possessed, physically brave, intellectually curious, scientifically minded, widely read, a translator of Hume, and, until 1787-8, a successful ruler. Even his arranged marriage, inauspicious at the outset, became an amicable relationship which encompassed both the birth of children and the queen's passion for the handsome Swede, Axel Fersen. Marie Antoinette herself changed from being a capricious and frivolous girl into a serious-minded woman, and a telling passage from her instructions to the last governess of her children enables Lever to measure the extent of that change. In this reassessment

of the royal pair some old myths are dispelled, like those of the clumsiness of the king and of the relative decline of the court. The king may have been inelegant and gauche at times, but Lever reminds us that his expression was noble, his nose long, aquiline, distinguished. She might have added that Napoleon, it is said, later copied the king's distinctive waddle, or *dandinement*, because he found it regal. Similarly, the queen is given credit for continuing to focus the attention of courtiers on Versailles when they might otherwise have drifted off to Paris.

Why, then, did the royal couple not weather the political crisis of 1786-9? Lever's thesis is that, although Louis XVI was eager to introduce changes (greater fairness in taxation, for instance), he did not want to give up his power or to preside over the destruction of the *ancien régime*. Yet, by his systematic acquiescence in everything that took place from the fall of Calonne in 1787 to the invasion of the Tuileries in 1792 he achieved the opposite of what he wanted. Why did he not have the deputies of the self-styled "National Assembly" expelled after the sitting of June 23, 1789? Why did he understate the force of possible sedition in Paris after July 12 and the successful outcome of the populace's search for arms? Did he underestimate the gravity of the situation? He could have left Versailles after July 14 and rallied loyal troops in some uncontaminated provincial town. "Je sais que j'ai manqué le moment," he told Fersen three years later, "je l'ai manqué, c'était le 14 juillet. Il fallait alors s'en aller et je le voulais." At crucial moments like these his indecision was compounded by that of his ministers: for, like every good Bourbon monarch, he never decided anything without the backing of the majority of his advisers. Lever catalogues other instances of vacillation and irresolution as she shows the king forced to leave Versailles for Paris and to accept ministers whom he trusted as little as they trusted

him. The queen had an intuitive understanding of the rapidly changing political scene and helped him in the hopeless task of using and deceiving the various men of the moment, feeling, mistakenly as it turned out, that the spread of anarchy would somehow strengthen their hand. She and the king pinned all their hopes, first on a plan of escape and second, after its failure at Varennes, on armed foreign intervention. French historians always get censorious and patriotic whenever this last alternative is mentioned, and Lever is no exception, though she is less strident than her predecessors.

My own feeling is that she sells the king short. After all, with the goal which he fixed for himself (the stabilization of the political situation to his advantage or else a return to the *ancien régime*), and the limitations which he set himself (there was to be no bloodshed on his behalf), and the position in which he found himself from October 1789 onwards (that of a virtual prisoner in Paris), is it not a miracle that he survived on the political scene as long as he did? One suspects that a closer study of his largely unused political papers might help to supply the answer.

When the game was up, by September 1792, the king was ready to play the role which his otherwise straightforward nature and Christian upbringing demanded of him: that ultimate sacrifice of his life to his cause. Mme Lever finds it strange that his death should have regenerated the "myth" of monarchy. Clearly she knows little about the force of martyrdom in history. But that should not prevent her readers from enjoying her perceptive, elegant, and well-written biography of a complex monarch. It rings true.

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Behind the lines

Lorna Sage

"I met a traveller from an antique land / Who said . . . On the Piccadilly Line from Heathrow, perhaps. From February 1, Shelley's "Ozymandias" will be jostling for attention with Underground ads for language courses, duty free, mouthwashes, Harrods, and secretarial bureaux - and with four more poems, Burns's "Up in the Morning Early", Seamus Heaney's "The Railway Children", William Carlos Williams's "This is Just to Say", and "Like a Beacon" by Grace Nichols. "Poems on the Underground" is mainly the brainchild of Judith Cherniak, a New Yorker who is a novelist and reviewer living in London and more-over cheerfully immune to the routine hatred of cities that characterizes so much of native culture. The plan involves renting 1,000 "carriage seats" (in London Transport-speak) for moving poems new and old, selected by Ms Cherniak and two of the "Barrow Poets" (Cicely Herbert and Gerard Benson), "with a special place for poems connected with London", and a general view to "increasing the reading and enjoyment of poetry", not to mention the standard of metropolitan rush hour conversation. "Who said: 'Two vast and trunkless legs of stone / Stand in the desert . . .'"

Notions like this have been floated before. Margherita Laski is thought to have dreamed of something similar, and there was once upon a time a project to commission poems to paper over Glasgow, but the city fathers lost faith at the last moment. This time, however, thanks to the Compton Poetry Fund (which last year invited new ideas for "disseminating" poetry) and to interested publishers (in particular Faber and OUP) Ms Cherniak has actually got it on the rails. Selling poetry is the aim, rather than selling books (though Faber's Desmond Clarke has something less metaphorical in mind - "The British public spent £6 million on poetry last year", he told the *Bookseller* recently, "and there is no reason why this should not

be £9 million or more") and for the moment at least the poets' words and potted biographies will outshine their publishers' modest self-advertisements. A quiet launch is planned at out-of-hours Aldwych: quieter than planned, in fact, since byelaws ban musical bands and "Poems on the Underground" are strictly legal. Poems will have two months' exposure each, and the team are even now choosing the next batch, for April 1. There will be Shakespeare's Sonnet 29, for the City ("When in disgrace with fortune and men's eyes"), "The Trees" by Philip Larkin (who was on the Compton Fund committee, and encouraged the whole thing) and - perhaps - Stevie Smith: some sixth sense of civic duty is producing second thoughts about "Not Waving but Drowning" - too tragic for the 5.35? Comments, queries and contributions - £100, for example, will pay for the design of one Tube card, and the title of "Friend" - should be sent to Judith Cherniak, "Poems on the Underground", 124 Mansfield Road, London NW3.

The bicentenary of Jonas Hanway (1712-86), naval victualler, anti-tea campaigner and friend to chimney-sweeps' apprentices, hardly sounds an occasion to conjure with, but the History Study Group of the Royal Society of Arts last week held a day's symposium which gave him an improbably topical and significant air. In fact, he's exactly the RSA's kind of personage: their full title is The Royal Society for the Encouragement of Arts, Manufactures and Commerce, and they were founded in 1754, in Jonas Hanway's heyday before the Industrial Revolution, when everything seemed to hang together - self-love and social, mercantile opportunism and humane sentiment, Imperialism and Philanthropy. "Charity and Policy United" was one of his favourite mottoes (he liked mottoes), and he was himself a founder of many philanthropic organizations

— notably the Marine Society (1756), which still survives, and was the main mover in setting up the recent symposium. He also gave new impetus to the activities of the Foundling Hospital, and interested himself in the Magdalen Hospital for Penitent Prostitutes. In short, in that pre-Malthusian age, he saw people, and children especially, as a form of national investment; if you lay his favourite charities end to end, you get a project for recycling London's lost boys and girls into sailors (the Marine Society supplied around 10,000 sailors for the Seven Years War, and 69,000 during the Napoleonic wars), and domestic servants (all those reclaimed Magdalens).

A new biography, *Jonas Hanway: Founder of the Marine Society*, by James Stephen Taylor of Wells College, Aurora, New York (248pp. Scholar Press. £20. 0 85967 700 1) provides the first full account of his life and multifarious causes. Or full-ish. He came from a naval background, and though his youth was adventurous, with years spent in Portugal, and a traumatic trading trip through Persia to St Petersburg, he wasn't one of the great travel-writers (on all topics he wrote badly, with an enormous, deadly facility which goes a long way to explain his descent into near-oblivion), and it's only on his debut in the philanthropy business in the London of the 1750s that he really takes on substance. His stock-in-trade wasn't cash, but energy and conviction, applied with surprising thoroughness. In his victualler's hat, he was primarily responsible for supplying sauerkraut to sailors in the American war; as a private person (as private as he got) he made carrying an umbrella in London streets a manly and respectable thing (before him, totting a parapluie meant you were French, homosexual or a hairdresser, or possibly all three); he also campaigned for paving the streets of the City and Westminster in a uniform way; and he tried to alleviate the lot of the sweeps' climbing boys by recommending age-restrictions and rational fees.

The symposium's speakers had plenty to go on, and rose eloquently to the occasion: the closing paper, by the Marine Society's Secretary Richard Frampton, offered the suggestion that it was probably Hanway who gave Britannia her trident (until then, being Athena in disguise, she'd carried a spear), a piece of iconographical undidness and imperialist syncretism that seemed to typify the man. And like Britannia's trident (and umbrellas) his projects outlived his optimistic philosophy - the Foundling Hospital survived well into this century; the Magdalen Hospital celebrated its bicentenary in 1958 before closing, and the Marine Society still encourages young people to make the sea their career" (and provides a library service for the Merchant Navy) in defiance of cutbacks. There was, indeed, a strong-but-silent feeling around at the Royal Society of Arts that a Jonas Redivivus (his second favourite motto was "Never Despair") would be just the ticket for "Industry Year". There will be a special service at Westminster Abbey (where Hanway's memorial lurks between Cobden's and Warren Hastings's) on June 10, and (probably) an exhibition in the cloister. (Further information from The Marine Society, 202 Lambeth Road, London SE1 7JW.)

FIFTY YEARS ON

The TLS of January 25, 1936, carried a review by R. Charques of Paul Rotha's Documentary Film, from which the following extracts are taken.

Mr Paul Rotha's primary concern is with the cinema neither as art nor as an industry but as "a powerful, if not the most powerful, instrument for social influence to-day". For those unversed in the synthetic terminology of the intellectual film "fan" (the book) has moreover its discomfort. But these are of little moment beside the good sense and the idealism of the vision which Mr Rotha has brought to the discussion of the social potentialities of the cinema. . . . The function of the cinema, as he sees it, is to provide evidence about the world as a community's way of life and bring it home with the force of propaganda. . . . The documentary method alone has for its object the deliberate awakening of a sense of public

affairs and problems. . . . The method has elsewhere been described by Mr Orison . . . as "the creative treatment of actuality"; and Mr Rotha . . . is very much of [this] way of thinking. . . . [For] Rotha, the intellectual and moral values to which an elaborate [commercial] studio product gives expression are inevitably those of a class engaged in indirect propaganda for the preservation of its material interests. . . . It will be apparent that the line of argument demonstrated here converges markedly on the left. This is not surprising, for the aesthetic and the political vanguard of the cinema have long ceased to be distinguishable from one another. Mr Rotha's interpretation of culture, though it is expounded with some awkwardness and confusion of terms, is frankly that of the intellectual school. It does not, however, seriously prejudice his case for a greatly extended production of documentary films.

Letters

Spender's 'Journals'

Sir, - Trying to understand Joseph Brodsky's letter of December 27 in defence of Stephen Spender, I wonder whether he may not have intended the contrary of what, in his first sentence, he actually says, that "Ian Hamilton . . . its historical emergence and contemporary development, is characterized by having both common elements and a richness born out of diversity", and demonstrate "ce que nous avons en commun dans nos civilisations" (his sort of thing sounds a great deal better in French). Melina Mercouri was the main inspirer of the project, and Athens last year the first city chosen, with a compendious programme of exhibitions (including a French one on "The Birth of Writing" and a British one on "Woman's Place") and of theatre (including Peter Hall's *Coriolanus*, and Ibsen and Chekhov from Berlin), plus conferences and assorted diversions, such as a Soviet rock opera.

This year the City of Culture is Florence, Amsterdam in 1987, Berlin in 1988, Paris in 1989. It all has to be done, though, on 30 ECUs a time. Or that's the theory in Brussels. One secret of the cultural ministers' unanimity lies in the concluding paragraphs of the agreement. "The Member State in which the designated European City of Culture lies decides which authority inside the Member State will take responsibility for organizing and financing the event." Which is why Florence's Assessor della Cultura, Giorgio Morales, is waiting patiently for the Government in Rome to pass a Bill to give the city some help. Meanwhile, though, 1986 is luckily the sixth centenary of Donatello's birth, so that there's a ready-made itinerary (S Croce, Orsanmichele, the *Moss dell'Opera del Duomo*, S Lorenzo) that centres on the Bargello, which will be reorganised around "David", "John the Baptist" and "St George". Also, the "Judith" is being retained to mark the occasion; and it's Andrea di Sarto's quinqucentenary too. Less promising perhaps, is the plan to reopen the *Opificio* the Art School near Porta Romana, with collection of bright, white, large-scale plaster casts of, for example, Michelangelo's "David". Still, it's free. On the international front, plans are hazier: there will be an exhibition of the Renaissance works from Detroit, and Florence's various twin cities (Fez, Cracow, Edinburgh) are being canvassed for ideas. Things will come together by the summer, and, says Signor Morales (who's checked with his opposite number in Athens, Spiro Mercouri) that soon enough anyway "you get a better class of tourist in the autumn".

It will all prove possible, of course, partly because of the traditions of local autonomy: Italian regions suffer and enjoy. Perhaps, in the same reason, it's just as well that no English city has been volunteered, given the abolition of the GLC and the Metropolitan Councils. "Ce que nous avons en commun dans nos civilisations" is being visibly diminished with the demolition of the metropolitan centres, and Arts Council policy and funding are tending in the same direction. But what about Edinburgh? The Florentines (who are, anyway, explicitly partial to tartan, and love the smell of a kiln) are looking forward to a two-day delegate, who might carry the torch-back. Doubtless, though, Lisbon, Madrid or Barcelona will get it together first.

But, summarized, doesn't Hamilton's article (i) posit a careerist Spender who has parlayed a tiny poetic capital into worldly fame and fortune; (ii) counter this with an alternative Spender pathetically imprisoned in the early valuation of his tiny poetic capital; and (iii) conclude that in now eliminating the "bold awfulness" from his early work Spender has left us with nothing much worth having?

There's plenty to confuse in the exposition. The distancing mechanism of "our unkind observer" hardly holds off the verve and relish of the setting forth in part (i), and the affirmative sobriety of part (ii) betrays a sense of strain. Evenhandedness (as it were) is exemplified locally in plenty of fancy footwork, but there's no chiding of Spender for being tentative that I can see; whatever the uncharitable might have had to say about using the appearance of modesty to disarm critics. There is something very odd, though, in finding "the out-throat's point of view" and the presence of "the hater" in these lightly equivocal proceedings: Brodsky's darkly allegorical characterization of tone baffles me as much as his version of Hamilton's argument.

None of the rapid lateral movements in respect of Spender's personal obscurity Hamilton's consistent presentation of the poems as really pretty dreadful, even in his praise of them (my favourite being his tribute to "the awkward, falling spontaneity that gives a weird glow even to the most silly and pretentious of his Poems" (1933)) and most lethally in his choice of quotation. But having elicited his fitters Hamilton might have developed his comments on the poems in some direction instead of playing to the end it giving with one hand and taking with the other and worrying at Sir Stephen's not particularly interesting or problematic public career. Reviewing the *Journals* he had to discuss all that in some degree, of

course, but to readers who are not friends, colleagues, rivals, lovers, protégés or enemies it only matters embodied in the poems as a record of consciousness, or when it helps to understand the poems. Here it matters intensely, and an examination of the poetic career would tell us more about love, illusions, good faith and bad faith and the British middle classes, and a deal besides, than any amount of fretting or bitching or indignation over the public facts. Mr Brodsky says nothing about Spender's poems.

PETER ROBB.

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Racial Prejudice

Sir, - In his review of John O'Neill's *Five Bodies* (January 10) Dennis O'Keeffe assures us that we live "at a time when racism is being whittled away by economic evolution and by legal processes". On the facing page Mark Bonham Carter quotes the 1983 Policy Studies Institute Report *Police and People in London* as saying that "the level of racial prejudice in the Force is cause for serious concern"; quotes a 1981 Home Office survey as showing that Asians in this country are fifty times as likely as white people to be the victims of physical attack, and Afro-Caribbeans and Africans thirty-six times as likely; and adds that both report and survey show "a frightening lack of confidence among these groups in the will or capacity of the police to protect them".

There is a remarkable discrepancy here. And now the *Guardian* (January 11) tells us that "racial attacks in the East End of London increased by more than 25 per cent and became more violent last year". Attacks on Bengalis in Tower Hamlets involved "abuse and intimidation, window breaking, banging on doors and windows, excreta and other material through letter boxes, physical harassment of women and children and more violent assaults". The latter involved the use of knives, metal bars, broken bottles, lumps of wood - and arson, in "a deliberate and calculated attempt to kill and maim". Racist adults are now, it seems, trespassing within schools and carrying out attacks on the premises; in one such attack a fourteen-year-old boy was stabbed in the back in a corridor between lessons. Some "whittling away"!

Would Mr O'Keeffe be willing to explain his apparent complacency? Surely a lecturer in Education at North London Polytechnic cannot be unaware of what is happening virtually on his own doorstep?

PETER FRYER.

Flat 11, 64 Shepherd's Hill, Highgate, London N6.

'Monuments and Maidens'

Sir, - Marina Warner (*Letters*, January 10) may know better, but I don't think that the picture of Temperance discussed in my review of *Monuments and Maidens* (December 20) has been mistitled. The portrait is part of a collection of American primitives assembled for the American Stanhope Hotel, which has a large clientele of art dealers. Perhaps the artist didn't know what he was doing, or the painting was mislabelled by one of its subsequent owners, but I don't think its subject could be Liberty, as Miss Warner suggests, since Liberty was already well in place when the Capitol was built. Nor do I believe that she could be a fledgling State, or she would be carrying some appropriate symbol. And Temperance, as we now know, did make her way to the Capitol about seventy years after the portrait was painted, with unpleasant results. But readers may be relieved to know that the hotel bar is just opposite the painting.

MARYLEFKOWITZ.
Wellesley College, Wellesley, Massachusetts.

Yuri Trifonov's novels *The House on the Embankment* and *Another Life*, which were reviewed by Geoffrey Hocking in the TLS of December 6, 1985, are published in Michael Glenn's translation by the Abacus imprint of Spere Books and now, as was stated in the publication details preceding the review, by Abacus Press of Tunbridge Wells.

'Shall I Die?'

Sir, - In that "Shall I die?" is so badly written, few readers have been willing to accept it as Shakespeare's. The poem has been called "a clunker", "a mess", a "wretched piece of doggerel". But a collective impression that the poem is not very good tells us nothing, finally, about whether or not Shakespeare actually wrote it - nor will a universally hostile response substantially weaken Gary Taylor's case. His argument, after all, does not rest on the poem's aesthetic merits. His case depends instead on the authority of the Rawlinson text in which the ascription is made, and on the strength of his supporting internal evidence. On both points, his argument founders.

Hundred of miscellanies like the Rawlinson volume have survived. These private anthologies of verse were generally assembled by gentlemen with a casual interest in poetry. The first thing one learns when working with them is that they cannot be trusted on their own authority. A brief poem appearing in a dozen such miscellanies may well have fifty or more variant readings and several different ascriptions. A typical example is William Strode's "On a Gentlewoman Walking in the Snow", which appears anonymously only a few pages after "Shall I die?" This ten-line poem appears in some three dozen seventeenth-century collections, with countless variants, and is variously ascribed to "W. S.", "W. St.", "T. R.", "Munsey" and "Dr. Corbet".

According to Mr Taylor, the Rawlinson miscellany is more dependable than others of the same vintage. Two years ago, after studying this volume at Oxford, I concluded that it was not especially trustworthy and that "Shall I die?" was almost certainly not by Shakespeare. I was therefore startled, when Taylor made his announcement, that he would place so much faith in this manuscript. In December I returned to Oxford to examine it once again.

I can report that Taylor's faith in the manuscript is unwarranted. Though the handwriting is elegant, the texts in the Rawlinson volume are, in most cases, terribly corrupt. Whole lines are omitted, copied twice, or mangled. It is evident from manifest errors that the texts are corrupt even for those thirty or so poems which have not survived elsewhere. (Taylor himself - before learning that "Shall I die?" is extant in another, better, text - felt compelled none the less to make emendations in five of the nine stanzas.) As for those items which appear as well in more reliable texts, one can scarcely find a dozen consecutive lines in Rawlinson without a variant reading. Worse still, many of the variants unique to this miscellany make no sense whatever. The scribe responsible was either unusually careless, or worked from terribly corrupt texts, or both. The poor quality of the texts hardly lends credibility to the manuscript's many doubtful attributions.

Taylor nevertheless asserts that none of the ascriptions is "demonstrably wrong" and that forty are "demonstrably right". In fact, fully half of the fifty-four attributions in this miscellany are subject to doubt. Only five are confirmed by an authorized text printed during the poet's lifetime or by an extant autograph copy. Any other testimony, however plausible, is subject to error. *Shakespeare's Works* no further than the British and Bodleian libraries - are contradicted at least once by other seventeenth-century testimony; eleven others are without confirmation elsewhere; and seven, though without conflicting testimony, were nevertheless excluded from the collected works of the respective poets as printed in the seventeenth century. Though the Rawlinson miscellany is undoubtedly correct in some instances, even when contradicted by other authorities, it is certainly not without errors.

Taylor was unaware, when making his claim, that "Shall I die?" appears in a contemporaneous manuscript-miscellany owned since 1972 by Yale's Beinecke Library. Both the Yale and Rawlinson volumes were compiled between 1637 and 1639. They contain fifty-eight of the same poems, including a few items which, like "Shall I die?", are apparently extant only in these two volumes. The Yale miscellany was compiled by Tobias Alston, a Suffolk teenager. We do not know who put together the Rawlinson collection, though the

continued on next page

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All for love

Mary Warnock

MARILYN FRENCH
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"Women are trained for private virtue, men for public power; and the severance between the sexes and the two realms is responsible for much of our irrational thinking and behaviour." This is the central thought of Marilyn French's long book. In one respect she is right. There is a genuine need to bridge the gap between private and public morality. The traditional concepts of morality, such as truthfulness, loyalty, honesty and altruism (the virtues of character) are not the attributes needed by politicians, nor do they carry much weight in the public sphere. Yet, officially, both politicians and private people are thought to have an obligation to be "good". The same vaguely utilitarian ideal is thought to cover the conduct of both.

But is it true that women would, if they had power, somehow close this gap? Marilyn French suggests that they would. In her wide-ranging interpretation of history (with some anthropological and sociobiological observations thrown in) she offers a vision of a possible future in which women, devoted to pleasure not power, would be responsible for a world in which swords would be beaten into ploughshares, and harmony and love would prevail.

Her general thesis is that men, who have hitherto governed the world, have always sought power above all else, and, in the interests of power, have invented the system of patriarchy which dominates all Western art, philosophy, religion and education. Above all it now dominates industry and politics. Power means not power over the world in general, but power over other people. It is sought for its own sake, and has become, at our present stage of history, the highest value, at least among males. The opposite of patriarchy is feminism. Patriarchy is cerebral, rational, and committed to transcendence, or permanence. Feminism is emotional, bodily, and committed to the belief, not in permanence, but in continuity, achieved through procreation. The overall goal of feminism is pleasure; and pleasure is identified with love.

Such opinions are, of course, by no means novel. Veteran feminists such as Dora Russell have been writing of this vision since the early part of the century. According to such theories, if women ruled there would be a world of peace and harmony, and bloodshed would be no more. I doubt whether anyone who has spent time in a girls' school would hold that there was much evidence for the benignity and love here ascribed to women in contrast with men. Women, too, in real life, are capable of grasping at power and of fighting their rivals, if not with swords, then at least with weapons almost equally disagreeable. Women are not always mutually supportive; and if Marilyn French (or indeed Dora Russell) thinks that women do not seek to dominate, then a course in the novels of Ivy Compton-Burnett should perhaps be recommended.

Some of Marilyn French's gloom about the present state of the world is doubtless justified. She is right to hold that, in matters concerning

our environment, we need a completely new set of values, which transcend the personal, and somehow enable us to think of the future not in terms of ourselves, but of our successors on earth. In the eighteenth century, the landed gentry could think in such long terms because they were certain of their own continuity through their heirs. And so they could plan their marvellous gardens, the full maturity of which they would never themselves witness. We, with less confidence in the future, find it difficult to think of the effects on the world of our own immediate needs and wishes. The concept of continuity is one that we need to reinstate. But there is, as far as I can see, no evidence that women are better at thinking in such long terms than men. It is simply prejudice to suppose that they are.

Those moderate feminists who wish that there should be equality between men and women will be horrified and alarmed by the extreme stereotyping they find in the pages of this book. The whole of history, from the earliest times, is rewritten in accordance with the unsupported theory of gender-difference. John Stuart Mill, who thought women the equals of men, and fit for the same jobs at the top, would turn in his grave. But this is, after all, precisely the issue between radical feminists (of whom Marilyn French must be counted as one) and the rest. Are women to be allowed to be ordinarily ambitious? Or must they content themselves with the ideals of procreation and peace, estimable ideals of course, but in the real world so dismally marked with failure? It seems that women are still faced with a choice: the choice between Downing Street and Greenham Common.

Public house and public good

David Miller

JOHN DUNN
Rethinking Modern Political Theory: Essays
1979-83
230pp. Cambridge University Press. £25
(paperback, £8.50).
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Political theory is an odd sort of activity. Taught in university departments as though it were an academic subject on a par with mathematics or biology, the topics it addresses bear an alarming resemblance to those aired nightly in saloon-bars up and down the country. Although its academic practitioners can claim a distinguished ancestry, and may display formidable conceptual sophistication in handling the issues raised, the suspicion remains that the answers they give are in the last resort no better grounded than those offered free of charge in the Rose and Crown.

In response, conscious or otherwise, to this suspicion, academic political theorists have been drawn towards various alternative conceptions of their enterprise. One such alternative is historical scholarship, the ever more detailed analysis of the context and meaning of the great texts of past centuries. A second is political philosophy, the formal dissection of the arguments used to support political standpoints of one sort or another. A third is underlabouring for political science, providing the conceptual and explanatory tools for the empirical analysis of political behaviour. Each of these alternatives appears to absolve the political theorist from taking sides on the issues that divide the patrons of the Rose and Crown, and to hold out the promise of respectable academic neutrality.

It is to John Dunn's great credit that he resists all such temptations and insists (in the seventh essay of this book) on the continuity of what he calls "professional" and "amateur" social theory. It is, he points out, a distinctive feature of modern societies that their inhabitants need an understanding, both causal and normative, of the functioning of their own society (and indeed of world events outside it), in order to be intelligently at all. Amateur theories are indispensable. Professional social theory, produced by intellectuals and drawn upon by politicians for their official doctrines, offers a more explicit and sophisticated version of the same thing. The crucial political ques-

tion, in Dunn's view, is whether the professional theory that acquires official status concurs with or contradicts the amateur theories held by most citizens. This determines whether a society is held together by trust, as Dunn for obvious reasons prefers, or by force.

Judged by this criterion, the leading professional theories on offer - identified here as Utilitarianism, Marxism and Utopian Liberalism - do very badly indeed. Utilitarianism, whatever its merits as a guide to public policy, is very implausible as a theory of individual action, for reasons that Bernard Williams and others have elaborated. Marxism offers a powerful causal understanding of politics, often leading those who embrace it to be remarkably effective in attaining power, but it is bereft of any plausible account of the good society. Utopian Liberalism - an umbrella term for Rawls, Nozick, Dworkin *et al* - provides a sophisticated understanding of political value, but very little by way of causal understanding of political processes in and between states, and so as a theory about how to act politically in the real world it is barren.

These verdicts are harsh, but fair. We now look to Dunn for some guidance in the matter of how a better professional theory might be constructed. In this book we are led off in two rather different directions. The opening three essays are devoted to Locke, held up as the example of a successful professional theory. Locke, according to Dunn, correctly identified the central question in politics: how is it possible for a political community to be founded on mutual trust? But Locke's answer presupposed both a theology and a conception of the self that rendered people morally responsible for their actions and beliefs, and as Dunn acknowledges these presuppositions have historically been displaced. Modern theories, both amateur and professional, are predominantly secular, and embody a causal understanding of human agency. Locke is therefore not a plausible starting-point for contemporary political theory, but rather a benchmark against which the success or failure of contemporary theory can be judged.

Dunn's more positive proposal is that we should seek to revitalize a form of liberalism that takes prudences as its central virtue. Although sketched only briefly, this chiefly involves the imberic steering of a middle course between attractive-seeming polar alternatives: between citizen participation and political leadership; between personal

freedom and social solidarity, between markets and planning. Liberalism of this sort is pessimistic creed, alive more to the dangers of politics than to its possibilities, and therefore flexible in content; "liberalism so conceived may well in practice in particular societies at particular times entail a politics which describes itself as either socialist or conservative".

What seems to have brought Dunn to this conclusion, farther removed than he might care to admit from the confident political liberalism of Locke, is his repeatedly expressed anxiety about the present threat of nuclear annihilation. One can well see how scepticism on this possibility may make arguments about the proper extent of public ownership seem petty by comparison. But this lay perspective is not, I think, that of most of the amateur theorists to whom Dunn wishes to speak. These amateurs are likely to adopt a fatalistic attitude to the nuclear threat, regarded as to all intents and purposes outside their control, and continue to argue about wage differentials, tax rates and the price of beer. Nor, when the nuclear issue becomes the centrepiece of an amateur theory, as in the case of some activists, does a politics of prudences in Dunn's sense normally emerge. Instead one is likely to find what Weber calls an ethic of ultimate ends.

But to express some scepticism about the content of Dunn's revamped liberalism is not to cast doubt on his view of how political theory itself should be conducted. Here we can only admire the immense historical sophistication that Dunn brings to his task, as well as his sensitivity to causal questions about the workings of political institutions. In these respects he leaves most contemporary political theory far behind. The same high degree of methodological self-consciousness, however, makes him reluctant to lay his cards clearly on the table, and readers may sometimes find difficulty in discerning the main thrust of his arguments. But his guiding assumption, that political theory cannot be a narrowly academic enterprise, but must try to formulate a response to things that ordinary men and women take up and act upon in their daily lives, is irrefragable.

The second edition of *European Political Thought 1918-84* by Chris Cook and John Pincus (280pp. Macmillan. £27.50, paperback, £10.95 0 333 37027 9) will be published shortly.



"The Watchmen", 1925, by Eric Gill, from the exhibition Pencil, Pen and Brush: Modern British Drawing at the Gillian Jason Gallery, 42 Inverness Street, London NW1, until February 14.

Disciplinary actions

Dennis Wrong

MARTIN BULMER
The Chicago School of Sociology:
Institutionalization, diversity, and the rise of
sociological research
285pp. University of Chicago Press. £26.75.
0226 080048
ARTHUR J. VIDICH and STANFORD M. LYMAN
American Sociology: Worldly rejections of
religion and their directions
380pp. Yale University Press. £30.
0300 030371
LESTER R. KURTZ
Evaluating Chicago Sociology: A guide to the
literature, with an annotated bibliography
303pp. University of Chicago Press. £18.70.
0226 464768
HANS JOAS
G. H. Mead: A contemporary re-examination
of his thought
266pp. Oxford: Polity Press. £22.50.
07456 0062 X

The last half of the nineteenth century witnessed the birth of sociology in the United States as well as in Western Europe. The term, invented by Auguste Comte in 1838, at first connoted sweeping speculative reconstructions and anticipations of the direction of human history, usually deploying a polysyllabic vocabulary borrowed from evolutionary biology. In the United States, as in Britain, Herbert Spencer rather than Comte was the master theorist with whom it was necessary to come to terms. The early American sociologists (except for William Graham Sumner) were disposed to find a larger place for human purpose and agency within the process of social evolution than were the doctrinaire Social Darwinists.

But social evolutionism, Darwinism, and the debates they inspired were scarcely sufficient by themselves to provide the foundations of a new intellectual discipline institutionalized in colleges and university teaching programmes. Right after the Civil War, before any of the specialized social sciences had yet become clearly differentiated, "social science" became identified and distinguished from moral philosophy in general as the concern with particular social problems such as crime, alcoholism and poverty. These had become increasingly visible as a result of the processes of industrialization, urbanization and mass immigration. Civic organizations were created which attracted social workers, clergymen and reformers in general as well as college teachers. But the generation which in the 1880s began to go to Germany for graduate study sought to introduce into the colleges and newly created universities something more rigorous and less narrowly practical than philanthropic and reformist concerns. History, economics and psychology first emerged as intellectual disciplines with their own teaching programmes (or "departments"), specialized journals and academic associations, to be followed by anthropology, political science and sociology.

Although the entire process of differentiation into separate fields took place in less than two decades, the earliest disciplines to establish themselves were those possessing a clearly delimited concrete subject-matter. Sociology ended up annexing the study of the discrete social problems that had aroused the interest and concern of the earlier, often non-academic, reformers before the rise of the modern American university after 1880. As a result it was dubbed the "science of leftovers". Yet in addition to including a range of disparate topics defined as social problems and thus involving practical and moral considerations, the field also embraced grand theorizing in the Comtean and Spencerian vein that seemed to encompass all the subjects of the other social sciences along with much else as well: Tension between "ambitious theorizing - elevating sociology virtually to the status of a *scientia* *scientiarum*" - and narrow practicality, or, from another perspective, between Olympian abstraction and moral or political engagement, has marked American sociology from its earliest days.

It was not long before an autonomous interest in methods and techniques of fact-collection (initially subordinate to "muckraking" or to the practical needs of reformers for relevant kinds of information) emerged as a

third independent focus of interest and specialization within sociology - threatening to transform it, as C. Wright Mills complained in the 1950s, into "the methodological specialty" lacking any subject-matter distinctively its own. The history of American sociology is the history of fluctuations between the three main topics of abstract theory, social problems suggesting reform, and method.

The claim can plausibly be made that the most successful ventures in sociology have been those which at least appeared to integrate these three elements: research carried out by reliable and repeatable methods on topics of some generic or theoretical interest which at the same time were politically or morally problematic. The first American school of sociology to achieve such a combination was that of the University of Chicago in the second decade of the century. From roughly the beginning of the First World War to the end of the Second, American sociology was almost coextensive with the Chicago department. Actually, the latter was at least *primus inter pares* from its foundation in 1893 as the first department of sociology anywhere. By 1915 it had already granted the largest number of American PhD's in sociology, just over a third of a total of nearly a hundred. Columbia University came second with about a quarter of the total. These two institutions have continued to the present day to lead in the numbers of degrees granted in sociology.

Chicago sociology was distinctive less because of any uniform theoretical outlook or preferred set of methods than because it established what has proved to be a nearly unbreakable association between sociology and empirical research. Martin Bulmer seems, then, to be entirely correct in stressing, even in the subtitle of his *The Chicago School of Sociology*, the ascendancy of social research as the major contribution of the Chicago school. This spelt the death of the old style of speculative theorizing in the grand manner of Sumner, Lester Ward, Franklin Giddings, and the founding generation of American sociologists. Not that the urge to build intellectual systems encompassing the entire social universe without leaving one's armchair or desk has vanished - it may well be one of the ineradicable impulses behind sociology as such. But, as in the case of Talcott Parsons or Jürgen Habermas, it justifies itself today more modestly as "meta-theory", or the construction of "conceptual schemes" ancillary to the actual investigation of the world, or it relies upon the empirical work of others, including historians, to provide an evidential base for generalization when one is needed. At the very least, it is felt to be necessary to elaborate complex anti-empirical social epistemologies, as in recent theorizing influenced by French structuralism; if concrete studies of the real world are ignored.

The Chicago sociologists have been accused both of moralistic muckraking in their explorations of crime and sin in the wicked big city and of mindless or "raw" empiricism - the collecting of facts as an end in itself. In *American Sociology* Arthur Vidich and Stanford Lyman, indeed, make both charges in choosing to single out and extol one strand of the Chicago tradition, the "symbolic interactionist" social psychology derived from G. H. Mead and Herbert Blumer. There was certainly, as Vidich and Lyman report, plenty of moral zeal in early American sociology, often linked with the Protestant churches, to discover and remedy the social evils of urban life. Late and post-Chicago sociology has also produced its share of "dust bowl" empiricists and ritualistic "number crunchers". But, as both Bulmer and Lester Kurtz in *Evaluating Chicago Sociology* show, in its salid days after the First World War into the 1930s Chicago sociology succeeded in transcending these tendencies, or in holding them in some sort of balance within the wider theoretical ambience of W. I. Thomas and Robert Park: the two real founders of the Chicago school.

Both Thomas and Park had studied in Germany. Thomas's interest in comparative ethnology contributed to *The Polish Peasant in Europe and America*, described by Bulmer as "a landmark of empirical sociology"; and, citing Lewis Coser, as "the first great classic in American empirical sociology". Park had learnt selectively from various German social theorists, including Simmel and Tönnies. Vidich and

Lyman criticize Coser for remarking on the failure of the Chicago sociologists to appropriate the European tradition "in a systematic manner", but Bulmer, who clearly wrote his book to praise rather than to bury the Chicago school, makes the same point in referring to the "vague and inchoate ideas of Thomas and Park". Coser doubtless had in mind primarily that Marx, Durkheim and Weber figured not at all in the Chicago canon. Indeed, a latter-day Chicago product, Howard S. Becker, has mockingly (though not without justice) described these three as the reigning "Holy Trinity" of contemporary sociology. Vidich and Lyman assume that Coser meant to praise Talcott Parsons, who first established canonical stature for Durkheim and Weber in American sociology. And they do not like Parsons. (They do not like Marx, or at least his present-day followers, either, it should be added.)

Bulmer's book is an institutional history concentrating on the period from 1915 to 1939, emphasizing the interdisciplinary links of sociology at Chicago, especially with political science, as well as the larger context of the university administration and the city of Chicago itself. Bulmer is especially concerned to underline the contribution of Thomas to the department, which he thinks has been insufficiently acknowledged. He also calls attention to the department's empirical social research, including its pioneering use of methods such as the collection of personal documents (eg, life-histories), participant observation, social or ecological mapping, and the development of census tract statistics for urban areas. He is particularly eager to correct the current identification of Chicago sociology with qualitative ethnographic-style field research by recalling its considerable quantitative contributions, especially those of Ernest Burgess, William F. Ogburn, and their students. Vidich and Lyman, on the other hand, ignore Burgess's mediating role and treat Ogburn as a Trojan horse from the East who destroyed the distinctive Chicago ethos. Lester Kurtz goes even further in suggesting that the 1935 revolt in the American Sociological Society against Chicago dominance, which led to the creation of a new journal, was a revolt against the quantification and positivism supposedly centred in Chicago.

In fact, there were positivists on both sides of that conflict, but they predominated among the anti-Chicagoans who also, aroused by the Great Depression and the New Deal, favoured a more left-wing, politically activist style of sociology. Since the revolta within sociology of the 1960s were aggressively anti-positivist, equating quantitative work with the "technocratic" manipulations of an oppressive capitalist-militarist establishment, it is, not surprisingly, often forgotten that an earlier generation of rebel sociologists hailed statistical techniques aiming at "hard" science-building as liberation from a bookish and ruminative sociology indifferent to the burning problems of the day. Bulmer's useful book helps set the record straight, at least where Chicago sociology is concerned.

Kurtz has assembled a bibliography of publications on Chicago sociology from the founding of the department until 1950. There are over a thousand items. He also provides a guide of nearly one hundred pages that tries so hard to be comprehensive that it rarely succeeds in being more than a roster of names, dates, topics studied and citations. Although the bibliography unearths articles from some obscure and non-sociological journals it also misses much. My own own first encounter in Canada with a sociology that was largely Chicago-influenced, no doubt makes me particularly sensitive to Kurtz's gross mishandling of the Chicago-Canada connection. The only full-length book on Park, cited in the bibliography, is by a Canadian and was published by a Canadian university press. A few additional Canadian references are cited, but the considerable volume of Canadian work is largely neglected; although Canadian sociology was an early and far from insignificant offshoot of Chicago. Everett Hughes, with Blumer the last major figure from the era of Chicago ascendancy, taught at McGill and wrote a major study of a Quebec town. After the Second World War, he taught Erving Goffman, by far the most illustrious recent graduate of the Chicago department and a Canadian himself who was first attracted to sociology in Canada. Yet Kurtz

confines himself to quoting an obscure California graduate student journal as "claim[ing] that Chicago sociology had considerable influence on the development of Canadian sociology". The bibliography then describes the same source as referring only to French Canada.

Bulmer writes that "it is an error of historical interpretation to identify the Chicago school too closely with . . . the work of George Herbert Mead, or an embryo symbolic interactionism". He chooses, therefore, to concentrate on some of the less-remembered facets of Chicago sociology, for it is indisputable that of all the vintage Chicago figures only Mead remains a living presence in American sociology. Hans Joas's short book, *G. H. Mead*, translated from the German, reveals at long last interest in Mead's thought in Europe, as does the discussion of Mead in the second, still untranslated part of Habermas's voluminous *Theory of Communicative Action* (reviewed in the TLS on April 6, 1983). Mead grasped the full dependence of human consciousness and self-hood on language long before the "linguistic turn" in modern philosophy became a commonplace as a result of the influence of British ordinary language analysis and the various structuralist and post-structuralist schools in France. Saussure's celebrated insistence on the arbitrariness of the connection between signifier and signified was independently recognized as of crucial importance by Mead. But Mead saw it as pivotal to understanding the link between thought and action rather than as a key to interpreting texts or to theorizing about language itself as an autonomous structure. Since he saw symbols (Saussure's "signs") as originating in social behaviour and making possible a transition from nascent to full communication, one can understand why Mead's work was of interest to sociologists.

Joas does not overlook Mead's views on intersubjectivity and symbolic interaction, but he also discusses at length such primarily philosophical themes in Mead's thought as his theory of perception, his reflections on the

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(1984)

nature of time, and his implicit philosophy of science. Sociologists have tended to minimize the fact that Mead was first and foremost a professional philosopher. His most influential sociological disciple, Herbert Blumer, ignored Mead's description of himself as a "social behaviourist" and changed his "symbolic communication" to the more general "symbolic interaction". Mead's precise and highly specific focus on language as the bridge between body and mind and as the precondition for the reflexivity of human consciousness had their origins in the epistemological preoccupations of the neo-Kantianism that he encountered in Germany in the 1890s. Sociologists have blurred the specificity of his concerns while reading into them – often, to be sure, fruitfully – wider social and moral implications. Vidich and Lyman provide an example of such misreading when they interpret Mead's concept of the "generalized other" relativistically as reflecting the secure moral consensus of the American Midwest early in the century, although for Mead the concept is primarily a necessary "grammatical fiction" inherent in language itself, to borrow Kenneth Burke's term for the correlative fiction of the "I". Mead was rather more a theorist of language and an epistemologist and less a sociologist or social psychologist than his sociological followers, including Blumer, have chosen to acknowledge.

Vidich and Lyman's book is based on two potentially valuable conceptions neither of which they follow up in anything but the most casual and desultory fashion. The first is their attempt to review the history of American sociology according to its major institutional locations, not overlooking the various regional subcultures that have influenced it. But they make no real effort to live up to even the minimal requirements of such an approach, contenting themselves with the occasional reference to the patrician cultural ambience of Harvard, the impact of Midwestern populism on Chicago and Wisconsin, and the liberating influence of life in California on Berkeley, where the junior author studied, but not on Stanford or the University of Southern California, where the dead hand of American Protestantism allegedly continues to stifle sociology.

They do not even for the most part look at sociology departments as collective enterprises. Most of the book consists of summaries of the writings of individual sociologists, or early teachers of sociology, with ample direct quotations interspersed with the occasional comment or critical judgment. There is rarely even the suggestion of a rationale for why some people are selected for attention rather than others. In the case of the University of Chicago, for example, complete chapters are devoted to Albion Small (the founder of the department), Park, and Blumer; Ogburn is discussed at some length in one of the chapters on Columbia. But Thomas, Burgess, Hughes and Louis Wirth, figures of comparable importance, are barely mentioned or not at all. More seriously, Vidich and Lyman achieve the difficult feat of making demonstrably false statements in just about everything they say about sociology at Harvard and Columbia since the 1930s. When they manage to be so consistently wrong on this fairly recent past, one is not encouraged to have much confidence in what they say about more distant, less accessible times, particularly when their bibliography omits several important titles.

Vidich and Lyman's second organizing idea, stated in their subtitle, is that much American sociology constitutes a secularized version of religious, specifically Protestant, doctrines. This is entirely plausible, for many, even most, of the early American sociologists started out as ministers. The association between the Protestant churches and higher education was closer in America than in any other Western nation in the period when sociology was born. Sociology's early years coincided with the Social Gospel movement in American Protestantism and with the Progressive era when clergymen, shocked by the inequities and vulgarities of uncontrolled industrial capitalism, played a leading role as reformers.

But Vidich and Lyman handle their theme so superficially and tendentiously that they almost manage to cast doubt on its inherent credibility. They claim their purpose is to show how sociology's "religious past" still affects its "intellectual perspectives" but their hidden

agenda seems to be to discredit much of later sociology by finding religious echoes in it. Their opening chapter reviews the thought of Henry Hughes, the first American Comtean, who published in 1854 a treatise defending Southern slavery as both sociologically viable and consistent with Christianity. The hint of an underlying affinity between sociological positivism, Protestantism and racial exclusiveness recurs throughout the book. Yet the authors never so much as mention the fact that the leaders of abolitionism were Protestant ministers convinced that slavery was a moral abomination, or that a century later the black leaders of the Southern civil rights movement were almost to a man also Protestant ministers.

Vidich and Lyman continually rely on vague metaphorical suggestiveness. Sociologists who seek to explain large-scale social phenomena are said to be offering "secular theodicies", or "sociodicies", a term to which these authors are inordinately addicted and evidently think they invented, although I recall Raymond Aron using it a long time ago. Aptitude and intelligence tests are said to "replace . . . the Puritan God's incomprehensible justice and predestined life plans". We are told that critics of statistics were viewed as "pagans" holding out against "the army of quantitative Christian manqué soldiers who sought to march sociology ever onward and upward".

Rather than piling up examples, a review of one case that is only too typical will have to suffice to illustrate the authors' slipshod ways. They write:

The concept of deviance, especially as developed by Parsons's student Robert K. Merton, provides an index and taxonomy of desirability. A peculiarly American contribution to social theory, the concept of deviance presupposes a national normative consensus, a nationwide covenant of visible saints.

Merton argued that the high value placed on success in the United States led to the widespread use of illegal or deviant means to attain it in a society in which opportunities are far from equal. In short, conformity to one prime American value itself generates nonconformity to others because social and economic classes exist. Understandably, Merton's famous theory appealed to left-liberal reformers and influenced actual policies adopted in the Johnson Administration's "war against poverty". I submit that the theory is unrecognizable in Vidich and Lyman's version of it. American sociologists may have invented the "concept of deviance", but they did not in order to set up a standard for separating the saintly sheep from the sinful goats, but rather to overcome the "nuts and sluts" image of

courses on social problems by providing a non-invidious label for the topics they covered. Vidich and Lyman write that for sociologists at the University of California "deviance, a concept central to the Protestant sociological orientation, was in effect ruled out". Perhaps so, but I have several books on my shelf by the very authors named that contain the word in their titles. Vidich and Lyman contrast studies by the Californians of criminals, mental patients, religious sectarians, gamblers and nudists with comparable earlier studies by Chicago sociologists in the 1920s and 1930s. The Californians, we are assured, shun all moral judgment of their subjects, relishing the sheer diversity of "life styles" flourishing around them, whereas the Chicagoans were bent on the "economic and moral salvation" of the people they studied. The Chicago reports on hoboes and their haunts, juvenile gangs, taxi dance-halls, and rooming-house occupants were the first sociological works I read; they were modest, near journalistic efforts that are largely forgotten today, but they breathed a spirit of curiosity and even excitement over the human variety offered by the pulsating life of the metropolis. Far from being moralistic, this spirit was liberating for the sons of farmers and small-town ministers recruited into sociology at that time. It reflected, moreover, a wider fascination in the 1920s with the big city present in literature as well, including Carl Sandburg's famous poem about Chicago itself and Brecht's early poems and plays, two of which were located in an entirely imaginary Chicago.

Not until the penultimate sentence of their book do Vidich and Lyman explicitly declare their own standpoint:

Whereas the positivists and the functionalists have exchanged the promised utopia of a world-wide Christian community for the bloodless entelechy of a society-centred dynamic equilibrium, the heterodox sociologists speak of an open-ended world, of existential phenomena, of the contingencies of history, and of the individual located somewhere between freedom and determinism.

A fairly dense statement that, but it makes plain that these authors want to define themselves as heretics rebelling against a positivist and functionalist orthodoxy that they see as the lineal descendant of the Protestant ethos in early American sociology.

But what if there is no reigning orthodoxy, if today American sociology is like Vidich and Lyman's blessed California, in which a hundred flowers are allowed to bloom? I have not run into a professing functionalist for over a decade and I will bet Vidich and Lyman have

not either. On the other hand, if by "the positivists" they mean no more than people who use quantitative methods, there are still many of them in American sociology, in good health in this age of the computer. However, they longer invoke, or depend for legitimization on, positivism as a philosophy of science, nor does that only their expertise can save us from social perdition. Vidich and Lyman seem to be locked in an adversary posture which lost its relevance nearly twenty years ago, or else they have a perverse penchant for flogging dead horses.

American sociology has never been one fragmented or pluralistic than it is today, because of a spirit of tolerance that has become so expanded in size in the 1960s that every faction is now able to preserve an encyclopaedic and intellectual existence. Hence the nostalgia for an "establishment" or a "main stream" from which to dissociate oneself, in constant jousting with the ghost of Parsons and the endless shelling of what William Gass over a decade ago called the "empty castle" of functionalism.

Actually, functionalism never was as dominant in the 1940s and 50s as it is now reputed to have been, nor did it ever match the ascendancy of Chicago sociology in the twenty years before that. Parsons was both more than functionalist and a rather special kind of functionalist. His influence was greatest at a few League universities: his own Harvard, Columbia (where I studied), Princeton (where I first taught) and Cornell. The animus against functionalism, therefore, often amounted to an American version of Oxbridge-bashing, by far the most influential left-wing critique of functionalism and positivism. C. Wright Mills was himself a member of the Columbia department, and the charge that functionalism was disposed to rationalize social inequality was first levelled by Melvin Tumin against his sociological colleagues and former students of his, Kingsley Davis and Wilbert Moore.

American sociology has ceased to exist but it will continue, I think, to be a home for many mansions. The three main concerns – theory, social reform and method – are widely separated as they have ever been. Theory has largely become once again its own tiny and exegesis of revered texts. The reformer of the 1960s has dampened down his traditional concern with social problems, and an ingrown, scholastic Marxism. Quantitative methods adaptable to many uses are now used as their own justification, claiming to serve a larger social or even intellectual purpose. The situation is unlikely to change in the foreseeable future.

Ritual totalities

Roderick Stirrat

STANLEY JEYARAJA TAMBIAH
Culture, Thought and Social Action: An anthropological perspective
411pp. Harvard University Press. £25.50.
0674 17969 2.

Stanley Jeyaraja Tambiah is best known for his major three-volume study of Thai Buddhism. In the essays collected together in *Culture, Thought and Social Action*, however, he discusses such seemingly arcane matters as the intricacies of Tibetan Buddhist building, the logic of Thai food prohibitions and the nature of the Indian caste system. He uses these disparate subjects to make good the claim that anthropology is centrally concerned with theory; with how we should understand the social.

Written over a period of seventeen years, these essays cluster around two related themes. The first concerns the nature of ritual and symbolism, which are universal features of human culture. Tambiah argues that ritual activity and symbolic thought are not equivalent to, or mistaken forms of, applied science. In "Form and Meaning in Magical Acts" he builds upon Austin's notion of the illocutionary act, where speech does not "describe" but rather "does" (as in the words of our wedding ritual). In Tambiah's work, rituals become "performative acts", acts by which a property is imperatively transferred to a recipient object

or person on an analogical basis". Ritual, magical or symbolic activity – formal combinations of words and actions – do not describe or symbolize something else. Rather, they achieve their goal through the imperative nature of the ritual itself. Thus, the criteria which must be employed in judging such acts are those of "validity", "accuracy" and "correctness". They cannot be judged in terms of the verification procedures of applied science.

Linked to his interest in ritual and symbolism is Tambiah's concern with the pre-modern state formations of South-East Asia, which he describes as "galactic polities". On the one hand, he argues, these decentralized and segmented states cannot be seen simply as the working out of a prior cosmology, nor can they be understood in terms of "base" and "superstructure". Rather, we have to view these, and by extension all political formations, as "total phenomena" in a manner which "transcends the classic distinction between expressive and instrumental action, between ideology and practice, between power as pomp and power as control of resources and people". Just as rituals have to be seen as totalities, so forms of the state have to be approached through what Tambiah refers to as "totalization", through linking together the various levels which go to form it. In the process the state itself becomes a "performative act". Crucially, Tambiah sees the social as holistic in nature. So comparison is a matter of comparing totalities, and not of juxtaposing elements or even groups of elements wrenched from their contexts.

Implicit in this collection is a critique, even rejection, of much which Tambiah sees central to the Western intellectual tradition. His discussion of ritual he castigates as the would search for scientific rationality in non-rational or magical acts. At the same time he dismisses the Marxist approach which would make ritual forces the primary movers in the social world, which works in terms of causal arguments. Further, any attempt at distinguishing "base" from "content", "thought" from "action", or even "cause" from "effect" is seen as an ethnocentric aspect of Western thought. Rejecting such analytical terms, Tambiah has much in common with recent writers such as Dan Sperber and Pierre Bourdieu.

One problem in Tambiah's work is that change is accommodated only tentatively. Totality is stressed at the expense of transformation; indeed, at times a static and totalizing cosmology seems all-important. Further, his theoretical positivism makes for very difficult reading in several of the essays. Yet his problems of comprehension even more than his able through his use, especially marked in the later essays, of an increasingly baroque and winding writing. His remarks (in "A Performative Approach to Ritual") on "atrophy of meaning" and the "stagnancy of an exhausted style" in ritual performances might also be directed at his own writing. Be that as it may, this is an important volume representing one of the ways in which modern anthropologists attempt to understand human societies and forms of life.

Turbulent tribune

Alan Bell

ROBERT STEWART
Henry Brougham: His public career 1779-1868
406pp. Bodley Head. £18.
0370 30271 0

Henry Brougham is one of the most remarkable characters in nineteenth-century British political history, but he has long been waiting for a complete modern biography. The hitherto standard life, by Chester New, only goes as far as 1830, its author having died before it was published in 1961. It is a solid piece of work, all too painstakingly informative on a career notable for its impetuous activity. The incompatibility between New's book and its subject points to a difficulty which any writer on Brougham must face, one which Robert Stewart has very largely overcome. The narrative of a headlong career must of necessity be held up by the explanation of intricate parliamentary and legal business: the stages of the Reform Bill negotiations, for example, or the political and procedural background of the trial of Queen Caroline. Dr Stewart has, however, handled the historical background of his subject with commendable lightness of touch, greatly assisted by his grasp of the tactics of political manoeuvre, which he is able to balance nicely against the complexities of a personality that was probably very disturbed, and certainly always disturbing to the man's contemporaries.

The whole life is seen in a generous context that intersperses general observations in the detailed commentary. "The press gallery is ever thankful for an adroitly turned phrase", Stewart remarks in a discussion of Brougham's style in parliamentary oratory, and students of early nineteenth-century history can similarly feel relieved when he himself indulges (sometimes, like Mr Pinfold when pronouncing on politics, "with more weight than originality") in general comments. It is particularly apposite to be reminded that "the intellectual cannot maintain his independence of thought, nor the humanitarian the ardour of his aspirations, within the English party system", when Brougham's attempt to be both prophet and politician, his chafing at the bridge imposed by party, were so relevant to his failures. The wish to develop an individual popularity in the country while bending party allegiances in parliament to his often self-interested wishes, is best seen from a wider standpoint.

Although this biography is subtitled "His public career", no great exclusions of private material have been made, and there is little of significance that could have been added to a life of one whose public activities and private existence were virtually the same. His marriage in 1819, to a dresy widow with a house in Hill Street and £1,500 a year, is briskly mentioned as "exercising no discernible influence on Brougham's public career". Not at ease in society, Mrs Brougham rarely went out with her husband before a severe post-natal depression (for which she was commonly reckoned mad) withdrew her from normal circulation, and there is very little to be added about her from contemporary sources. Their one surviving child, Eleanor Louisa (after whom Brougham named his villa in Cannes), died in 1839, a great personal loss to her father, who otherwise seems to have achieved domestic contentment in his own family at Brougham Hall.

Private life impinges on public activity more importantly in the "recurrent bouts of psychosomatic languor and fever" which Stewart sees as recurring almost biennially from 1801. These attacks were the counterpart of Brougham's excessive activity at other times, but they were disconcerting for his contemporaries. Creevey saw them as hypochondriac affliction following throughout much of his career. Prominent cases, like the defence of Leigh Hunt and his brother in a libel action in 1811, or his parliamentary advocacy of the Northern commercial interest when wartime orders-in-council interfered with free trade with America, increased his personal standing, and indeed his professional business. He conducted a notable, though unsuccessful, election campaign at Liverpool, and in 1818 attempted to take Westmorland by storm.

Brougham's background in the Scottish Enlightenment, and Stewart makes up the deficiency. Though Brougham's family was of Westmorland landed stock, his parents lived in Edinburgh (his mother was a niece of the Edinburgh Principal William Robertson), and it was to his upbringing there and education at the High School and University that he owed some of the most important elements in his political philosophy; this adoptive background is rather simply described. Brougham himself managed to shake off quite easily the disadvantageous reputation of Scotchness when making his mark in London political circles. Almost as important as the Enlightenment philosophy which he absorbed from a tender age was the connection he established with the *Edinburgh Review*, to which he was a major contributor from the start, giving it some of its distinctive political stance through his many articles. Stewart does not analyse the *Edinburgh* essays in detail (their sheer bulk would make that difficult), but concentrates on pieces like the notorious Don Cevallos article of 1808, with its threats to the English aristocratic order based on recent events in Spain. Throughout his career, Brougham's writing went hand in hand with his political activity, and his long series of slave trade articles, for instance, was influential in preparing the public mind for eventual abolition.

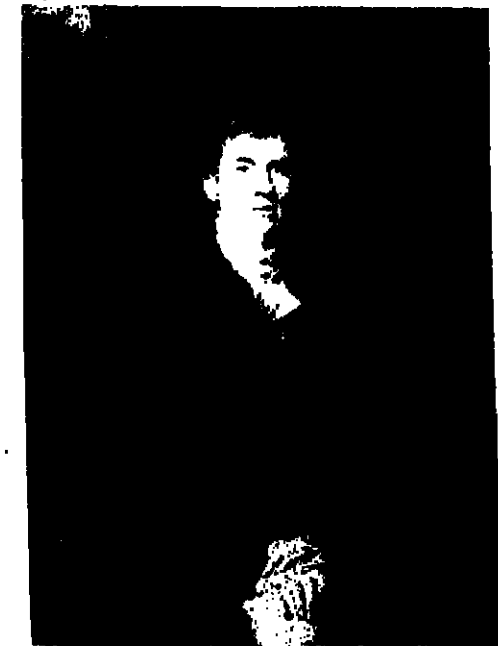
From his Edinburgh days, too, dates his outstanding reputation as an orator, on which his achievement in the law courts, on the hustings, or in Parliament, depended. It is good to be given a full account of the style which impressed the country for so long. "To come to the yellowed pages of a speech armed with the knowledge of its prodigious contemporary effect", Stewart remarks, "is to invite disappointment: the columns of Hansard are filled with wilted blooms." The samples given here (best read aloud to be savoured properly, though their "cadences are sometimes too rich for modern ears") are a fair, and very impressive, selection. Brougham's style was acquired early in life by listening to the best preachers and advocates of contemporary Edinburgh, and by careful analysis of chosen texts. He urged Demosthenes and Dante on the young Macaulay for study, and Brougham frequently reverted to classical models for his most telling effects, particularly in his famous, carefully rehearsed perorations.

He did not distinguish enough between the requirements of the House of Commons and those of the Assize Courts, showing himself sometimes as too intricately informed for the one and too vehement for the other, but enough is recorded of his most effective deliveries for his general success to be proved. His distinctive manner, and mastery of oratorical action, is attested by Henry Cockburn and others; gesture and posture were brought into service as soon as the interest of a case or the high principle of some parliamentary cause had banished the calculated languor of his demeanour while unengaged. Then, argumentative in Court (though seldom displaying much deep legal knowledge, and preferring to compel the jury rather than persuade them), or sarcastic and inveighing in the Commons, he was wondrous to behold, not least when he used his eye to fix his audience. It was an eye finer than Haydon had ever seen before, when he came to paint Brougham's portrait, "the cornea shining, silvery and tense, like a lion's, watching for prey". Brougham knew how to use it to the best possible effect, whether indulging his instinct for attack, or exercising his mastery at replying, "the most difficult and most essential of parliamentary arts". No wonder opponents learnt to be wary, and ministries had to work out their tactics very carefully when Brougham was engaging in a major debate.

Largely through such platform accomplishments, he was able to claim a widespread public following throughout much of his career. Prominent cases, like the defence of Leigh Hunt and his brother in a libel action in 1811, or his parliamentary advocacy of the Northern commercial interest when wartime orders-in-council interfered with free trade with America, increased his personal standing, and indeed his professional business. He conducted a notable, though unsuccessful, election campaign at Liverpool, and in 1818 attempted to take Westmorland by storm,

being defeated by the Lowther interests (aided by Wordsworth and De Quincey in an inglorious episode of journalism) only at vast expense.

Daring engagements like these gave him a strong provincial following, but his performance as Attorney-General to Queen Charlotte at the time of her "trial" (actually the hearing of evidence during the Annulment Bill readings) in 1820 set the seal on his reputation. Brougham had seen the Queen's Business, apart from the political implications of the case, as an opportunity to enhance his own popularity. As with so many other incidents of his career, it is not easy to sort out the various elements of self-seeking and duplicity in this complicated case, but it is very clear that Brougham's personal popularity soared after the case was over.



Thomas Lawrence's portrait of Brougham, 1825, in the National Portrait Gallery, London.

In 1830, the invitation to stand for the Yorkshire seat, with the guarantee that all expenses would be met by his supporters, was an obvious outcome of this carefully cultivated following in the country. He felt able to speak with a special mandate of electoral commendation which he believed set him above the contrivances of mere party organization. His standing, and his self-esteem, were at their height. Yet after only a few weeks, and despite repeated assertions that he would never desert his constituents, he accepted the Lord-Chancellorship. Stewart rightly sees Brougham's taking the Seals as the great turning-point in his career, demonstrating all the tensions between popular acclaim and parliamentary mistrust that had been characteristic of his membership of the Commons.

For the party and parliamentary view of the member for Yorkshire had long been very different from the esteem in which his constituents held him. "However he may be admired or feared as an Orator or Debater", Greville had written in 1828, "he neither commands respect by his character nor commands respect by his genius." Character and genius were the very qualities by which Brougham had been able to satisfy his parliamentary aspirations when he had first come to London, already known as an (anonymous) contributor to the *Edinburgh Review*, making himself useful to the anti-slavery work of the largely Tory Clapham Society before finding himself more appropriately attached to the Whigs, with whom he was never wholly at one, and as much an outsider to their aristocratic circles as Canning was to the Tories. The Whigs had needed him even more than he needed the Whigs, to make up their lack of an effective speaker in the Commons, where the party leadership was most unimpressive. Brougham's competence over a very wide range of subjects brought him speedily to the fore. His skill was never in doubt, but his preference for following his own line, flitting at times with the radicals, at times hoping the Tories might help him form a middle grouping, led to his being widely distrusted. Tricks like asserting in debate that there was party backing for his personal opinions did not endear him to colleagues, and his reputation for intrigue and duplicity grew to the point when the great question, as the Whigs

approached the probability of office, was "What is to be done with Brougham?"

He was too headstrong and unreliable for leadership of the House, especially when the delicate negotiations for parliamentary reform were the main business. He repeatedly asserted that he would not accept a Cabinet office, but was prickly at having been passed over; such attitudes would make him a dangerous back-bencher. Appointment to the Wool-sack was a convenient shunt out of the mainstream of parliamentary business. Reform was deftly taken out of his hands, and he was placed in an eminence that recognized his standing, but safely removed him from his popular, demagogic ambitions.

Though no longer dangerously situated, he could still be mischievous. He had a confidential relationship with *The Times* during the Reform Bill period which allowed him to get up to his usual tricks, and this continued until the newspaper turned against him and subjected him to a good deal of personal abuse. The confidential transactions of the Reform parliament, including the possible creation of peers to secure passage of the Bill, were much to his taste, and he showed himself meddling in the events leading to Grey's resignation, whatever the motive may have been. His behaviour as Chancellor had become increasingly regrettable, and when he was finally excluded from the Cabinet no one was surprised. As Stewart puts it, "In four years he had fallen from a height of popularity rare in the English party system to a depth from which he was never, politically speaking, to recover. Not one of Brougham's friends in politics thought him ill used. They were left to sorrow at the spectacle of uncommon talents rendered unserviceable by common delinquencies."

Thereafter he was, in Greville's phrase, "a political Ishmael", making attacks on the Whig ministry that now lacked any moral authority. Even at the *Review* he found himself overtaken by the rising star of Macaulay. Brougham continued to write extensively for the *Edinburgh* under Napier (Jeffrey's successor, whom he attempted to tyrannize), but no longer with the knowledge of primacy of reputation. The final thirty years of his life, easily covered in a single chapter, makes sad reading after the attainments of his earlier years.

A career in which so much had been thrown away through an innately injudicious touch would have been the sadder had there not been permanent achievements. Fortunately some of the causes to which Brougham attached himself for much of his long life lay outside the conventional boundaries of party division. Law reform, for which he had prepared himself in his professional career, became a major part of his personal parliamentary platform with a major speech in 1828, one of the longest ever made in the Commons (he consumed a hatful of oranges during its delivery). Choosing civil procedure for particular attack (others had criminal and Chancery reform in hand), he treated an attentive House to a prolonged Benthamite criticism of legal administration; Bentham himself resented not being properly acknowledged, but thoroughgoing principle was wisely tempered by a sense of political practicality, and by professional experience. The speech succeeded in carrying discussion outside the House, and laid the foundations for the achievements of the following decade, much of it initiated by Brougham himself when he became Lord Chancellor.

His experience of civil litigation was limited when he came to the Wool-sack, but he quickly got up the necessary knowledge and soon set about relieving the Chancery courts from the oppressiveness of Lord Eldon's administration. Brougham's ignorance of detail (though he had been well served by his early Scottish training throughout his English career) was perhaps to his advantage as a reforming Chancellor, as he had no cosy reverence for tradition. Some of his proposals failed, including one for local courts dealing with small debts litigation which was vigorously attacked by the learned and respected Lyndhurst; and "sacrificed to Tory malignancy". He was very successful, however, in organizing the appellate jurisdiction of the Privy Council, which (in spite of some unjust attacks by Bentham) remains Brougham's most enduring legislative achievement.

His work for popular education, even wider

nature of time, and his implicit philosophy of science. Sociologists have tended to minimize the fact that Mead was first and foremost a professional philosopher. His most influential sociological disciple, Herbert Blumer, ignored Mead's description of himself as a "social behaviourist" and changed his "symbolic communication" to the more general "symbolic interaction". Mead's precise and highly specific focus on language as the bridge between body and mind and as the precondition for the reflexivity of human consciousness had their origins in the epistemological preoccupations of the neo-Kantianism that he encountered in Germany in the 1890s. Sociologists have blurred the specificity of his concerns while reading into them—often, to be sure, fruitfully—wider social and moral implications. Vidich and Lyman provide an example of such misreading when they interpret Mead's concept of the "generalized other" relativistically as reflecting the secure moral consensus of the American Midwest early in the century, although for Mead the concept is primarily a necessary "grammatical fiction" inherent in language itself, to borrow Kenneth Burke's term for the correlative fiction of the "I". Mead was rather more a theorist of language and an epistemologist and less a sociologist or social psychologist than his sociological followers, including Blumer, have chosen to acknowledge.

Vidich and Lyman's book is based on two potentially valuable conceptions neither of which they follow up in anything but the most casual and desultory fashion. The first is their attempt to review the history of American sociology according to its major institutional locations, not overlooking the various regional subcultures that have influenced it. But they make no real effort to live up to even the minimal requirements of such an approach, contenting themselves with the occasional reference to the patrician cultural ambience of Harvard, the impact of Midwestern populism on Chicago and Wisconsin, and the liberating influence of life in California on Berkeley, where the junior author studied, but not on Stanford or the University of Southern California, where the dead hand of American Protestantism allegedly continues to stifle sociology.

They do not even for the most part look at sociology departments as collective enterprises. Most of the book consists of summaries of the writings of individual sociologists, or early teachers of sociology, with ample direct quotations interspersed with the occasional comment or critical judgment. There is rarely even the suggestion of a rationale for why some people are selected for attention rather than others. In the case of the University of Chicago, for example, complete chapters are devoted to Albion Small (the founder of the department), Park, and Blumer; Ogburn is discussed at some length in one of the chapters on Columbia. But Thomas, Burgess, Hughes and Louis Wirth, figures of comparable importance, are barely mentioned or not at all. More seriously, Vidich and Lyman achieve the difficult feat of making demonstrably false statements in just about everything they say about sociology at Harvard and Columbia since the 1930s. When they manage to be so consistently wrong on this fairly recent past, one is not encouraged to have much confidence in what they say about more distant, less accessible times, particularly when their bibliography omits several important titles.

Vidich and Lyman's second organizing idea, stated in their subtitle, is that much American sociology constitutes a secularized version of religious, specifically Protestant, doctrines. This is entirely plausible, for many, even most, of the early American sociologists started out as ministers. The association between the Protestant churches and higher education was closer in America than in any other Western nation in the period when sociology was born. Sociology's early years coincided with the Social Gospel movement in American Protestantism and with the Progressive era when clergymen, shocked by the inequities and vulgarities of uncontrolled industrial capitalism, played a leading role as reformers.

But Vidich and Lyman handle their theme so superficially and tendentiously that they almost manage to cast doubt on its inherent credibility. They claim their purpose is to show how sociology's "religious past" still affects its "intellectual perspectives", but their hidden

agenda seems to be to discredit much of later sociology by finding religious echoes in it. Their opening chapter reviews the thought of Henry Hughes, the first American Congregationalist, who published in 1854 a treatise defending Southern slavery as both sociologically viable and consistent with Christianity. The hint of an underlying affinity between sociological positivism and Protestantism and racial exclusiveness recurs throughout the book. Yet the authors never so much as mention the fact that the leaders of abolitionism were Protestant ministers convinced that slavery was a moral abomination, or that a century later the black leaders of the Southern civil rights movement were almost to a man also Protestant ministers.

Vidich and Lyman continually rely on vague metaphorical suggestiveness. Sociologists who seek to explain large-scale social phenomena are said to be offering "secular theologies", or "sociologies", a term to which these authors are inordinately addicted and evidently think they invented, although I recall Raymond Aron using it a long time ago. Aptitude and intelligence tests are said to "replace . . . the Puritan God's incomprehensible justice and predestined life plans". We are told that critics of statistics were viewed as "pagans" holding out against "the army of quantitative Christian manqué soldiers who sought to march sociology ever onward and upward".

Rather than piling up examples, a review of one case that is only too typical will have to suffice to illustrate the authors' slipshod ways. They write:

The concept of deviance, especially as developed by Parsons's student Robert K. Merton, provides an index and taxonomy of deviance. A peculiarly American contribution to social theory, the concept of deviance presupposes a national normative consensus, a nationwide covenant of viable values.

Merton argued that the high value placed on success in the United States led to the widespread use of illegal or deviant means to attain it in a society in which opportunities are far from equal. In short, conformity to one prime American value itself generates nonconformity to others because social and economic classes exist. Understandably, Merton's famous theory appealed to left-liberal reformers and influenced actual policies adopted in the Johnson Administration's "war against poverty". I submit that the theory is unrecognizable in Vidich and Lyman's version of it. American sociologists may have invented the "concept of deviance", but they did so not in order to set up a standard for separating the saintly sheep from the sinful goats, but rather to overcome the "nuts and sluts" image of

Ritual totalities

Roderick Stirrat

STANLEY JEYARAJA TAMBIAH
Culture, Thought and Social Action: An anthropological perspective
411pp. Harvard University Press. £25.50.
0674 17969 2

Stanley Jeyaraja Tambiah is best known for his major three-volume study of Thai Buddhism. In the essays collected together in *Culture, Thought and Social Action*, however, he discusses such seemingly arcane matters as the intricacies of Trobriand canoe building, the logic of Thai food prohibitions and the nature of the Indian caste system. He uses these disparate subjects to make good the claim that anthropology is centrally concerned with theory; with how we should understand the social.

Written over a period of seventeen years, these essays cluster around two related themes. The first concerns the nature of ritual and symbolism, which are universal features of human culture. Tambiah argues that ritual activity and symbolic thought are not equivalent to, or mistaken forms of, applied science. In "Form and Meaning in Magical Acts" he builds upon Austin's notion of the illocutionary act, where speech does not describe but rather "does" (as in the words of our wedding ritual). In Tambiah's work, rituals become "performative acts", acts by which a property is imperatively transferred to a recipient object

courses on social problems by providing a non-invidious label for the topics they covered. Vidich and Lyman write that for sociologists at the University of California "deviance, a concept central to the Protestant sociological orientation, was in effect ruled out". Perhaps so, but I have several books on my shelf by the very authors named that contain the word in their titles. Vidich and Lyman contrast studies by the Californians of criminals, mental patients, religious sectarians, gamblers and nude bathers with comparable earlier studies by Chicago sociologists in the 1920s and 1930s. The Californians, we are assured, shun all moral diversity of their subjects, relishing the sheer diversity of "life styles" flourishing around them, whereas the Chicagoans were bent on the "economic and moral salvation" of the people they studied. The Chicago reports on hoboes and their haunts, juvenile gangs, taxi-dance-halls, and rooming-house occupants were the first sociological works I read; they were modest, near journalistic efforts that are largely forgotten today, but they breathed a spirit of curiosity and even excitement over the human variety offered by the pulsating life of the metropolis. Far from being moralistic, this spirit was liberating for the sons of farmers and small-town ministers recruited into sociology at that time. It reflected, moreover, a wider fascination in the 1920s with the big city present in literature as well, including Carl Sandburg's famous poem about Chicago itself and Brecht's early poems and plays, two of which were located in an entirely imaginary Chicago.

Not until the penultimate sentence of their book do Vidich and Lyman explicitly declare their own standpoint:

Whereas the positivists and the functionalists have exchanged the promised utopia of a world-wide Christian community for the bloodless entelechy of a society-centred dynamic equilibrium, the heterodox sociologists speak of an open-ended world, of existential phenomena, of the confluences of history, and of the individual located somewhere between freedom and determinism.

A fairly dense statement that, but it makes plain that these authors want to define themselves as heretics rebelling against a positivist and functionalist orthodoxy that they see as the lineal descendant of the Protestant ethos in early American sociology.

But what if there is no reigning orthodoxy, if today American sociology is like Vidich and Lyman's blessed California, in which a hundred flowers are allowed to bloom? I have not run into a professing functionalist for over a decade and I will bet Vidich and Lyman have

not either. On the other hand, if by "the positivists" they mean no more than people who use quantitative methods, there are still many of them in American sociology, in good health in this age of the computer. However, they longer invoke, or depend for legitimization, positivism as a philosophy of science, a position that only their expertise can save us from social perdition. Vidich and Lyman seem to believe in an adversary posture which lost its relevance nearly twenty years ago, or else they have a perverse penchant for flogging dead horses.

American sociology has never been so fragmented or pluralistic than it is today, because of a spirit of tolerance than because so expanded in size in the 1960s that everything is now able to preserve an encyclopaedic social and intellectual existence. Hence the nostalgia for an "establishment" or a "main stream" from which to dissociate oneself, a constant jousting with the ghost of Parsons the endless shelling of what William Goetz over a decade ago called the "empty castle" of functionalism.

Actually, functionalism never was as dominant in the 1940s and 50s as it is now reputedly have been, nor did it ever match the ascendancy of Chicago sociology in the twenty years before that. Parsons was both more than functionalist and a rather special kind of functionalist. His influence was greatest at a few League universities: his own Harvard, Columbia (where I studied), Princeton (where I first taught) and Cornell. The adjectives again functionalism, therefore, often amounted to an American version of Oxbridge-bashing, by far the most influential left-wing critique of functionalism and positivism. C. Wright Mills was himself a member of the Columbia department, and the charge that functionalism was disposed to rationalize social inequality was first levelled by Melvin Tumin against his fellow colleagues and former students of his sons, Kingsley Davis and Wilbert Moore.

American sociology has ceased to exist but it will continue, I think, to be a house of many mansions. The three main branches—theory, social reform and method—are now widely separated as they have ever been. Theory has largely become once again the tiny and exegesis of revered texts. The reform of the 1960s has dampened down the traditional concern with social problems, and an ingrown, scholastic Marxism. Quantitative methods adaptable to many uses are now used as their own justification, claiming to give a larger social or even intellectual purpose. The situation is unlikely to change in the absence of some external upheaval.

Implicit in this collection is a critique, even rejection, of much which Tambiah sees central to the Western intellectual tradition. In his discussion of ritual he castigates those who would search for scientific rationality in what he calls magical acts. At the same time he dismisses the Marxist approach which would make ritual forces the primary movers in the social and which works in terms of causal arguments. Further, any attempt at distinguishing ritual from "content", "thought" from "action" or even "cause" from "effect" is seen as an ethnocentric aspect of Western thought. In rejecting such analytical terms, Tambiah's work has much in common with recent writings of Dan Sperber and Pierre Bourdieu.

One problem in Tambiah's work is the change is accommodated only uneasily. One tiny but stressed at the expense of translation; indeed, at times a static and unchanging cosmology seems all-important. Further, the theoretical position makes for very difficult reading in several of the essays. Yet his problems of comprehension even more than his problems of translation are not his own. He is puzzled by his colleagues, puzzled by his unpredictable and later essays, of an increasingly baroque and writing. His remarks (in "A Performative Approach to Ritual") on "atrophy of ritual performance" might also be directed at ritual performance might also be directed at the "stagnancy of all exhausted systems" and aspects of his own writing. But the way this is an important volume represents one of the ways in which modern sociologists attempt to understand the social and forms of life.

Turbulent tribune

Alan Bell

ROBERT STEWART

Henry Brougham: His public career 1779-1868
406pp. Bodley Head. £18.
0370 30271 0

Henry Brougham is one of the most remarkable characters in nineteenth-century British political history, but he has long been waiting for a complete modern biography. The hitherto standard life, by Chester New, only goes as far as 1830, its author having died before it was published in 1961. It is a solid piece of work, all too painstakingly informative on a career notable for its impetuous activity. The incompatibility between New's book and its subject points to a difficulty which any writer on Brougham must face, one which Robert Stewart has very largely overcome. The narrative of a headlong career must of necessity be held up by the explanation of intricate parliamentary and legal business: the stages of the Reform Bill negotiations, for example, or the political and procedural background of the trial of Queen Caroline. Dr Stewart has, however, handled the historical background of his subject with commendable lightness of touch, greatly assisted by his grasp of the tactics of political manoeuvre, which he is able to balance nicely against the complexities of a personality that was probably very disturbed, and certainly always disturbing to the man's contemporaries.

The whole life is seen in a generous context that intersperses general observations in the detailed commentary. "The press gallery is ever thankful for an adroitly turned phrase", Stewart remarks in a discussion of Brougham's style in parliamentary oratory, and students of early nineteenth-century history can similarly feel relief when he himself indulges (sometimes, like Mr Pinfold when pronouncing on politics, "with more weight than originality") in general comments. It is particularly apposite to be reminded that "the intellectual cannot maintain his independence of thought, nor the humanitarian the ardour of his aspirations, within the English party system", when Brougham's attempt to be both prophet and politician, his chafing at the bridge imposed by party, were so relevant to his failures. The wish to develop an individual popularity in the country while bonding party allegiances in parliament to his often self-interested wishes, is best seen from a wider standpoint.

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Private life impinges on public activity more importantly in the "recurrent bouts of psychosomatic languor and fever" which Stewart sees as recurring almost biennially from 1801. These attacks were the counterpart of Brougham's excessive activity at other times, but they were disconcerting for his contemporaries. Crewey saw them as hypochondria in origin, and knowledge of this intermittent affliction provided some basis for the view of Brougham's excessive activity at other times, but they were disconcerting for his contemporaries. Crewey saw them as hypochondria in origin, and knowledge of this intermittent affliction provided some basis for the view of Brougham's excessive activity at other times, but they were disconcerting for his contemporaries.

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New's biography was rather weak on

Brougham's background in the Scottish Enlightenment, and Stewart makes up the deficiency. Though Brougham's family was of Westmorland landed stock, his parents lived in Edinburgh (his mother was a niece of the burgher Principal William Robertson), and it was to his upbringing there and education at the High School and University that he owed some of the most important elements in his political philosophy: this adoptive background is rather simply described. Brougham himself managed to shake off quite easily the disadvantageous reputation of Scotchness when making his mark in London political circles. Almost as important as the Enlightenment philosophy which he absorbed from a tender age was the connection he established with the *Edinburgh Review*, to which he was a major contributor from the start, giving it some of its distinctive political stance through his many articles. Stewart does not analyse the *Edinburgh* essays in detail (their sheer bulk would make that difficult), but concentrates on pieces like the notorious Don Cevallos article of 1808, with its threats to the English aristocratic order based on recent events in Spain. Throughout his career, Brougham's writing went hand in hand with his political activity, and his long series of slave trade articles, for instance, was influential in preparing the public mind for eventual abolition.

From his Edinburgh days, too, dates his outstanding reputation as an orator, on which his achievement in the law courts, on the hustings, or in Parliament, depended. It is good to be given a full account of the style which impressed the country for so long. "To come to the yellowed pages of a speech armed with the knowledge of its prodigious contemporary effect", Stewart remarks, "is to invite disappointment: the columns of Hansard are filled with wilted blooms." The samples given here (best read aloud to be savoured properly, though their "cadences are sometimes too rich for modern ears") are a fair, and very impressive, selection. Brougham's style was acquired early in life by listening to the best preachers and advocates of contemporary Edinburgh, and by careful analysis of chosen texts. He urged Demosthenes and Dante on the young Macaulay for study, and Brougham frequently reverted to classical models for his most telling effects, particularly in his famous, carefully rehearsed perorations.

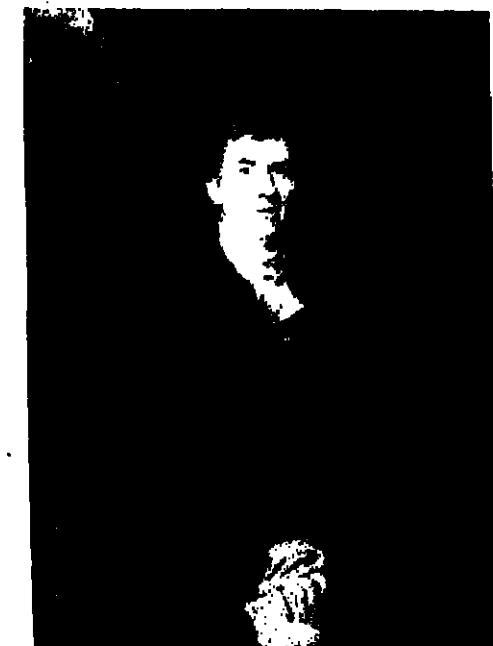
He did not distinguish enough between the requirements of the House of Commons and those of the Assize Courts, showing himself sometimes as too intricately informed for the one and too vehement for the other, but enough is recorded of his most effective deliveries for his general success to be proved. His distinctive manner, and mastery of oratorical action, is attested by Henry Cockburn and others; gesture and posture were brought into service as soon as the interest of a case or the high principle of some parliamentary cause had banished the calculated languor of his demeanour while unengaged. Then, argumentative in Court (though seldom displaying much deep legal knowledge, and preferring to compel the jury rather than persuade them), or sarcastic and inveighing in the Commons, he was wondrous to behold, not least when he used his eye to fix his audience. It was an eye finer than Haydon had ever seen before, when he came to paint Brougham's portrait, "the cornea shining, silvery and tense, like a lion's, watching for prey". Brougham knew how to use it to the best possible effect, whether indulging his instinct for attack, or exercising his mastery at replying, "the most difficult and most essential of parliamentary arts". No wonder opponents learnt to be wary, and ministers had to work out their tactics very carefully when Brougham was engaging in a major debate.

Through much platform accomplishments, he was able to claim a widespread public following throughout much of his career. Prominent cases, like the defence of Leigh Hunt and his brother in a libel action in 1817, or his parliamentary advocacy of the Northern commercial interest when wartime orders simply mad, Stewart, though far from imposing any psycho-biographical interpretation, judiciously quotes some apposite passages from an essay by Brougham on Samuel Johnson, which at least shows his sympathetic understanding of a condition that was always in the background of his hyperactive public life.

New's biography was rather weak on

being defeated by the Lowther interests (aided by Wordsworth and De Quincey in an inglorious episode of journalism) only at vast expense.

Daring engagements like these gave him a strong provincial following, but his performance as Attorney-General to Queen Charlotte at the time of her "trial" (actually the hearing of evidence during the Annulment Bill readings) in 1820 set the seal on his reputation. Brougham had seen the Queen's Business, apart from the political implications of the case, as an opportunity to enhance his own popularity. As with so many other incidents of his career, it is not easy to sort out the various elements of self-seeking and duplicity in this complicated case, but it is very clear that Brougham's personal popularity soared after the case was over.



Thomas Lawrence's portrait of Brougham, 1825, in the National Portrait Gallery, London.

In 1830, the invitation to stand for the Yorkshire seat, with the guarantee that all expenses would be met by his supporters, was an obvious outcome of this carefully cultivated following in the country. He felt able to speak with a special mandate of electoral commendation which he believed set him above the contrivances of mere party organization. His standing, and his self-esteem, were at their height. Yet after only a few weeks, and despite repeated assertions that he would never desert his constituents, he accepted the Lord-Chancellorship. Stewart rightly sees Brougham's taking the Seals as the great turning-point in his career, demonstrating all the tensions between popular acclaim and parliamentary mistrust that had been characteristic of his membership of the Commons.

For the party and parliamentary view of the member for Yorkshire had long been very different from the esteem in which his constituents held him. "However he may be admired or feared as an Orator or Debater", Greville had written in 1828, "the neither commands respect by his character nor commands respect by his genius." Character and genius were the very qualities by which Brougham had been able to satisfy his parliamentary aspirations when he had first come to London, already known as an (anonymous) contributor to the *Edinburgh Review*, making himself useful to the anti-slavery work of the largely Tory Clapham Sect before finding himself more appropriately attached to the Whigs, with whom he was never wholly at one, and as much an outsider to their aristocratic circles as Captain was to the Tories. The Whigs had needed him even more than he needed the Whigs, to make up their lack of an effective speaker in the Commons, where the party leadership was most unimpressive. Brougham's competence over a very wide range of subjects brought him speedily to the fore. His skill was never in doubt, but his preference for following his own line, flitting at times with the radicals, at times hoping the Tories might help him form a middle grouping, led to his being widely distrusted. Tricks like asserting in debate that there was party backing for his personal opinions did not endear him to colleagues, and his reputation for intrigue and duplicity grew to the point when the great question, as the Whigs

approached the probability of office, was "What is to be done with Brougham?"

He was too headstrong and unreliable for leadership of the House, especially when the delicate negotiations for parliamentary reform were the main business. He repeatedly asserted that he would not accept a Cabinet office, but was prickly at having been passed over; such attitudes would make him a dangerous back-bencher. Appointment to the Wool-sack was a convenient shunt out of the mainstream of parliamentary business. Reform was deftly taken out of his hands, and he was placed in an eminence that recognized his standing, but safely removed him from his popular, demagogic ambitions.

Though no longer dangerously situated, he could still be mischievous. He had a confidential relationship with *The Times* during the Reform Bill period which allowed him to get up to his usual tricks, and this continued until the newspaper turned against him and subjected him to a good deal of personal abuse. The confidential transactions of the Reform parliaments, including the possible creation of peers to secure passage of the Bill, were much to his taste, and he showed himself meddling in the events leading to Grey's resignation, whatever the motive may have been. His behaviour as Chancellor had become increasingly regrettable, and when he was finally excluded from the Cabinet no one was surprised. As Stewart puts it, "In four years he had fallen from a height of popularity rare in the English party system to a depth from which he was never, politically speaking, to recover. Not one of Brougham's friends in politics thought him ill used. They were left to sorrow at the spectacle of uncommon talents rendered unserviceable by common delinquencies."

Thereafter he was, in Greville's phrase, "a political Ishmael", making attacks on the Whig ministry that now lacked any moral authority. Even at the *Review* he found himself overtaken by the rising star of Macaulay. Brougham continued to write extensively for the *Edinburgh* under Napier (Jeffrey's successor, whom he attempted to tyrannize), but no longer with the knowledge of primacy of reputation. The final thirty years of his life, easily covered in a single chapter, make sad reading after the attainments of his earlier years.

A career in which so much had been thrown away through an innately injudicious touch would have been the sadder had there not been permanent achievements. Fortunately some of the causes to which Brougham attached himself for much of his long life lay outside the conventional boundaries of party division. Law reform, for which he had prepared himself in his professional career, became a major part of his personal parliamentary platform with a major speech in 1828, one of the longest ever made in the Commons (he consumed a hatful of oranges during its delivery). Choosing civil procedure for particular attack (others had criminal and Chancery reform in hand), he treated an attentive House to a prolonged Benthamite criticism of legal administration; Bentham himself resented not being properly acknowledged, but thoroughgoing principle was wisely tempered by a sense of political practicality, and by professional experience. The speech succeeded in carrying discussion outside the House, and laid the foundations for the achievements of the following decade, much of it initiated by Brougham himself when he became Lord Chancellor.

His experience of civil litigation was limited when he came to the Wool-sack, but he quickly got up the necessary knowledge and soon set about relieving the Chancery courts from the oppressiveness of Lord Eldon's administration. Brougham's ignorance of detail, though he had been well served by his early Scottish training throughout his English career) was perhaps to his advantage as a reforming Chancellor, as he had no cosy reverence for tradition. Some of his proposals failed, including one for local courts dealing with small debts litigation which was vigorously attacked by the learned and respected Lyndhurst, and "sacrificed to Tory malignancy". He was very successful, however, in organizing the appellate jurisdiction of the Privy Council, which (in spite of some unjust attacks by Bentham) remains Brougham's most enduring legislative achievement.

His work for popular education, even wider

in its effects, owes a great deal to the notions of improvement he had picked up during his early years in Edinburgh. The Mechanics' Institutes, for which he developed the notions of Birkbeck, Leonard Horner and others through vigorous advocacy in the *Edinburgh Review*, came to regard him as a patron, and the systems of instruction he devised for them led to the Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge. The Society's ambitious and successful publication programme was inaugurated by Brougham's own *Discourse on the Objects, Pleasures and Advantages of Science*, which reflected his delight in calculation and experiment that he sustained throughout his life.

Waterworks unclogged

F. M. L. Thompson

BERNARD RUDDEN
The New River: A legal history
335pp. Oxford: Clarendon Press. £20.
0198254970

The New River is today known to the residents of the most select part of Canonbury and those who enjoy the riverside walk there, and to some who seek or stumble upon stretches of its upstream course, glimpsed maybe in Winchmore Hill, Theobalds Park, or Broxbourne. A few curious householders in Clerkenwell or Islington who pore over their title deeds may recognize the New River Company as their original ground landlords, while dedicated architectural historians will know that the Oak Room, attributed to Grinling Gibbons, and originally the company's office at its Cistern House, is still to be found, incorporated into the Metropolitan Water Board's interwar building on Rosebery Avenue. Memory of the New River Company as London's oldest and largest supplier of water, however, has long since faded, for its name was last seen on water-rate demands in 1904. King's shares and Adventurer's shares in this undertaking, sometimes subdivided into fractions as small as 1/3436 of a share, are arcane mysteries which economic or social historians who chance to encounter them in some investment portfolio occasionally attempt to unravel. It has been left to Bernard Rudden to rescue the Crown Clog from oblivion, and to make publicly available this most enchanting of all the New River's curious creations.

The Crown Clog came about thus. The original adventurers, headed by Hugh Myddleton, who embarked in 1609 on digging a forty-mile channel from springs at Chadwell and Great Amwell, to Clerkenwell to supply the City with fresh water, ran out of money after one season's work. Persuading James I that this great enterprise would be of wondrous benefit to the good people of the City, and also highly profitable, Myddleton got James to

Though he was not accurate enough for further publications on the subject (a tract on hydrostatics had to be withdrawn when serious errors were discovered), the Society owed a great deal to his enthusiasm, and his conviction that such technicalities were within the reach of working men. The SDUK founded only when it overreached itself by starting a biographical dictionary that soon absorbed all the profits of the *Penny Cyclopaedia* and other publications.

Brougham's enlightened notions of the march of intellect, even if seen as an agent of civil control (where its enemies had detected in information only the agency of civil dis-

agree to put up half the capital cost in return for a half share of the eventual profits. Water did begin to flow to some City houses in 1613, and from 1615 the enterprise was showing an annual profit. This, however, seemed a meagre return — about 3 per cent — on the £9,000 or so which James had put into the concern, and in 1631 Charles I, being hard pressed, thought it an excellent bargain to sell his King's share to Myddleton for £500 in cash and £500 a year for ever. In the course of time it became understood that this rent of £500 a year which was paid to the Crown was a prior charge, deduction, or clog on the profits or income attributable to the owner of the King's share. To make matters more complicated, Myddleton's successors soon divided the King's share into thirty-six shares, only some of which were subjected to the clog, so that eighteenth and nineteenth-century dealings were in clogged or unclogged thirty-sixths of a King's share or subdivisions thereof. More bizarre still was William III's alienation of the Crown Clog by gift to the Earl of Albemarle, whose spendthrift son sold it to the Adair family of Flixton Hall in Suffolk, who then continued as the recipients of the Crown Clog money for the next 200 years until the Metropolitan Water Board finally bought out the Clog in 1956. It may be remarked in passing that if the Crown had held on to its half-share in the profits of the New River Company it would have received well over £8 million over the years; and the King's share, representing half the capital value of the concern, would have been worth at least £3 million in 1904.

It is the legal niceties surrounding such a curiosity as the Clog, which slipped from being a purely personal obligation of Myddleton's into being in effect a perpetual rentcharge on the Company's gross income secured on one special category of its shareholders by sleight of hand and without benefit of any contract, that fascinate the lawyer-turned legal historian, Professor Rudden traces with elegance and precision the often tortuous and always anomalous legal course along which the New River

content), were significant for later developments in the education of artisans, and the more enduring when applied to "the youth of our middling rich people". It was Brougham, backed by Quaker bankers and Jewish brokers, who put into practical form Thomas Campbell's general notion of the desirability of a London University. With characteristic speed and efficiency the "Godless college" was established in Gower Street, soon provoking (as the *Edinburgh Review* had called forth the *Quarterly*) the foundation of the Anglican King's College a few years later, and thus leading to the formation of London University.

Such reforming efforts could be continued

Company ran. From its inception — when the City purported to transfer to private adventurers powers that had been conferred by statute on itself as a corporation and which it could not legally give away, through its charter, which gave the adventurers property in the water flowing in the New River but not in the river bed (that remained in the possession of the original landowners across whose lands there was simply a wayleave) — to its incorporation as a company whose physical assets vested directly in the shareholders and not in the corporate body, the New River Company bristled with legal oddities and anachronisms that provided fertile ground for generations of litigation, bulging lawyers' briefs, and resoundingly complex and erudite high-court judgments.

If legal history is a matter of working out how legal minds, confronted with a novel situation, reach out for precedents and their well-tried modes of reasoning, and if necessary tie themselves in knots in order to make the new facts fit into the familiar legal framework, then the New River is a rich hunting ground and Rudden has given a dazzling display of the art. The layman must marvel at his mastery of the technicalities and applaud his teasing manner in chiding long-dead judges for the waywardness of their pronouncements. He can take in his stride the tricky question of what process might count as disseisin of a share, and inform us that "put at its simplest, the transfers treat a share as if it were the interest of a tenant in common in fee simple absolute in possession of a corporeal hereditament".

The book, however, is much more than a treat for lawyers of an antiquarian turn of mind, though it undoubtedly is that. It is interesting to learn that because the law treated the shares in the New River Company as themselves real property all the shareholders had two forty-shilling county votes, one in Hertfordshire and one in Middlesex. It is of wider significance to see how the New River Company, although in form of organization and hence in its law cases quite outside the mainstream of later joint stock companies and com-

pany law, nevertheless made a contribution of general importance to the wealthy and proprietary classes by establishing that shares could be as much the object of settlements, endowments, life interests and remainders as land itself, thus paving the way for the marriage settlements of plain capital funds which became popular with moneyed families. The contribution of the New River to the general development of the law, however, is scarcely any moment compared to its contribution to London's water supply.

Rudden's professed purpose is not to write the history of the Company as a water undertaking. His disclaimer is misleadingly modest for in between the lawsuits and leading cases there lies just such a history. Certainly the history rests on the making of the New River cut itself, whose story as an engineering work is not told. But it rests even more on the old pipes which, until 1811, formed the water distribution system through which the Company supplied at least a quarter of London's population. The pipes are given their due, the machine for hollowing out the tree trunks is depicted, and above all the vast area covered by these small-bore pipes lying spaghetti-like in row upon row is made clear. It was the technical need for space for elm pipes to take off water from its Clerkenwell terminal point that led the Company to acquire considerable acreage there. When these were replaced by cast-iron pipes — an operation itself partly financed under the Government's unemployment relief policy by a loan from the Bank of England in 1816 — land was liberated which the Company proceeded to develop most profitably with Myddleton Square, Chadwell Street, Amwell Street, and others drawing names from its past. When it went out of the water business nearly a hundred years later, in 1904, it remained in being as a property company, ripe in the end to be taken over by Sir Horace Rayne in 1974. From Myddleton to Rayne is a tale of adventure, risk, profit, vast capital gains, and not a little public service, stirring told.

jobs for voting Liberal made politics an almost clandestine business. If you fell out with a trawler-owner or encountered a local injunction, you looked for another job. You did not attempt to change the system. Once at sea, everything was different, or rather as it had been: minutely, daily. And there was the incessant work of aspects of it clearly explained in these capital pages. Trawling fleets fished every hour of the year and had their catches taken off each morning by Billingsgate fish-carriers. The work of some of these non-stop trawlers was the most dreaded of all. But there was huge eating: nine herrings each for breakfast and a couple of good plain food unknown to most ordinary folk. Trevor Lumma brings out the accuracy, intrepidity and stoicism of these East Anglian. A bemused 1933 Report speaks of the "Lowestoft man's" "purposeful determination in carrying out the end in view in face of all difficulties" and of his being the first to go to sea and the last to leave it. *Occupation and Society* gives us the austere social structure which held such a man in his place, as well as a convincing portrait of him.

It is oddly depressing that the glossary has to tell us what a bob and half-a-crown were.

The simple and the finite

Jay Parini

JAMES DICKEY
The Central Motion: Poems, 1968-1979
148pp. Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press. \$18.50 (paperback, \$8.95).
0819550914
PHILIP LEVINE
Selected Poems
234pp. Secker and Warburg. £8.95.
043624531

There is a tendency in American poets and novelists alike to become more expansive and "mystical" as their ambitions swell with age. This is perhaps all part of the need to "develop" — a need sometimes brought on by critics who, of course, love to chart such changes as might occur. James Dickey is one such poet, growing more ambitious and less successful over the years. One looks back longingly at those brilliant early books, collected in *Poems, 1957-1967*. In poems such as "The Heaven of Animals" and "Horses", Dickey added something new and indispensable to American poetry. With his grasp of nature's force and essential mystery, Dickey seemed an American Ted Hughes, focusing on natural objects, extracting their metaphoric richness. As in Hughes, too, there was an eye for the indifferently cruel yet often beautiful side of nature. But unlike Hughes, Dickey's poems gathered momentum quietly, and his best, such as "In the Treehouse at Night", often ended with a summary eloquence:

My green, graceful bones fill the air
With sleeping birds. Alone, alone
And with them I move gently.
I move at the heart of the world.

You would have to look hard, in his latest volume, *The Central Motion: Poems, 1968-1979*, for an equivalent power. Dickey appears to have had a difficult decade, thrashing about for something like the eerie control of his early work. The three books collected in this volume are full of good lines, which flash off the page like mugs; but an awful lot of panning is needed to find them. This passage, a typical one, is from "Under Buzzards":

Heavy summer. Heavy. Companion, if we climb
our mortal bodies
High with great effort, we shall find ourselves
Flying with the life
Of the birds of death. We have come up
Under buzzards they face us
Under buzzards they face us
Slowly slowly circling and as we watch them they turn us
Around, and you and I spin
Slowly, slowly rounding
Out the hill. We are level
Exactly on this moment; exactly on the same
bird-plane with those deaths.

One shudders at the obviousness of all this, the straining after meaning. In the early work, meaning accrued as the poet surveyed his subject. His control was evident even in the tidy arrangement of lines and stanzas. The new Dickey sprawls on the page, in every sense. But in the most recent work (from *The Strength of Fields*) included in this volume, he does seem to have recovered something of that early power. In a colloquy with God, he says: "More kindness, dear Lord / Of the renewing green. That is where it all has to start: / With the simplest things." It's as though he has had to learn, with much effort, a lesson he knew intuitively at the beginning.

Sublimity of the quasi-mystical sort has attracted Philip Levine, too, but he has exercised self-restraint, to good effect. Levine's *Selected Poems* is a striking volume. From the beginning of his career over twenty years ago he has written out of the narrow world of his working-class origins in Detroit. The crucial landscape of his imagination is urban and industrial. Like Bellow and Malamud, he writes with a strong Jewish sense of family and a quiet respect for the spiritual underpinning of the material world. Levine sticks up in his poems for the motor mechanic, the boy in the ghetto, the pig on its way to slaughter. His pig, in "The Animals Are Passing from Our Lives", fights back against the powers that be:

The boy
who drives me along believes
that any moment I'll fall
on my side and drum my toes
like a typewriter or musical
instrument, like a new housewife

discovering television,
or that I'll turn like a beast
cleverly to hook his teeth
with my teeth. No. Not this pig.

Levine resurrects a Detroit of the imagination with a lyrical power that emerges from the flat, unobtrusive line, as in "Snow":

Today the snow is drifting
On Belle Isle, and the ducks
are searching for some opening
to the filthy waters of their river.
On Grand River Avenue, which is not
in Venice but in Detroit, Michigan,
the traffic has slowed to a standstill
and yet a sober man has hit a parked car
and swears to the police he was
not guilty. The bright squads of children
on their way to school howl
at the foolishness of the world
they will try not to inherit.

His poems typically move towards a closure that often subverts the pessimistic tone of the early lines, as in the above, or in "A Sleepless Night", which ends: "A man has every place to lay his head."

Some of Levine's strongest poems invoke scenes and characters from the Spanish Civil War. Levine is a political poet in the deepest sense: he sees the origins of personal despair as social. Or he writes about the Holocaust in a way that begins and ends with the personal voice, as in "On a Drawing by Flavio":

Above my desk
the Rabbi of Auschwitz
bows his head and prays
for us all, and the earth
which long ago inhaled
his last flames turns
its face toward the light.

Levine takes consolation in the daily and seasonal recoveries of nature. He says in "Belief": "No one believes in the calm / of the North Wind after a time / of rage and depression". But Levine clearly does. Though tempted again and again by the call of the absolute, he takes refuge in the finite things of life.

Forthcoming events at the National Poetry Centre, 21 Earls Court Square, London SW5, will include a reading on January 30 by Jeremy Reed, whose new book *Nero* will be reviewed shortly in the TLS; an "Ambit evening", on February 4, to celebrate the 100th issue of the arts magazine, with readings by George MacBeth, Peter Porter and Tony Dash; and a series of readings devoted to women's writing — Marsha Pressod and Maud Sulter (February 6), Michèle Roberts (February 11), Kathy Acker, Catherine Byron, Frankie Finn and Sunji Namjoshi (February 13), Elizabeth Siddall (presented by Gillian Allnutt and Jan Marsh; February 18), and HD (presented by Diana Colcott and Michelene Wandor; February 27). All readings begin at 7.30pm.

Take your pick

Stephen Romer

BRIAN TAYLOR
Tranquil
128pp. London Magazine Editions. £4.50.
0904388306

Brian Taylor's long collection starts promisingly enough with a series of six "portraits": "A Woman, 1899", "A Man, 1901", "A Woman, 1909", and so on. They are all about sexuality, or sexual encounters, but then sex, or an obsessive fantasy version of it, is the beginning and end of the entire book. In these first poems, emotions are evoked, half-said or said delicately and fleetingly. In the fourth poem, a man (1914) expresses an anxiety: "When I cross the floor / of my own bedroom, I fear / to stumble into the snare / of her dropped stays and stockings". It would be tedious to count the number of fetishistic stockings, light or loose, or of off, that are scattered through the rest of *Tranquil*, which declines in quality as it goes on. Like anything repeated too often, these male-centred fantasies soon turn dreary. A few quotations from the sections "Amelia-Anne Stories" and "Ways of Henriette Wedjbu" adequately reveal Taylor's technique (which is usually neat) and his overwhelming obsession

From the Canton of Expectation

I
We lived deep in a land of optative moods,
under high, banked clouds of resignation.
A rustle of loss in the phrase *Not in our lifetime*,
the broken nerve in prayers with *vouchsafe* or *deign*,
were creditable, sufficient to the day.

Once a year we gathered in a field
of dance platforms and tents where children sang
songs they had learned by rote in the old language.
An auctioneer who had fought in the brotherhood
enumerated our humiliations,
the whole backlog of outrage and exaction
we always took for granted. But not even he
considered this, I think, a call to action.
Iron-mouthed loudspeakers shook the air
yet nobody felt blamed. He had confirmed us.
When our rebel anthem played the meeting shut,
we turned for home and the usual harassments
by militiamen on overtime at roadblocks.

II
And next thing, suddenly, this change of mood.
Books open in the newly wired kitchens.
Young heads that might have dozed a life away
against the flanks of milking cows were busy
paving and pencilling their first causeways
across the prescribed texts. The paving stones
of quadrangles came next and a grammar
of imperatives, the new age of demands.
They would banish the conditional forever,
this generation born impervious to
the triumph in our cries of *de profundis*.
Our faith in winning by enduring most
they made anathema: intelligences
brightened and unmanly as crowbars.

III
"What looks the strongest has outlived its term."
"The Future lies with what's affirmed from under."
Things that corroborated us when we dwelt
under the aegis of our stealthy patron,
the guardian angel of passivity,
now sink a fang of menace in my shoulder.
I repeat the word "stricken" to myself
and stand bareheaded under the banked clouds
edged more and more with brassy thunderlight.
I yearn for hammerblows on clinkered planks,
the uncompromised report of driven thole-pins,
to know there is one among us who never swerved
from all his instincts told him was right action;
who stood his ground in the indicative;
whose boat will lift when the cloudburst happens.

SEAMUS HEANEY

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